

# ROMANCE



by  
ACTON DAVIES



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## ROMANCE







“‘LET ME BE GOOD!’ SHE CRIED. ‘LET ME BE GOOD!’”

# ROMANCE

*A NOVEL*

BY  
**ACTON DAVIES**

FROM THE DRAMA  
**BY EDWARD SHELDON**

*With Pictures from the Play*

NEW YORK  
**THE MACAULAY COMPANY**  
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# ROMANCE

## PROLOGUE

SUSAN BREAKS IT GENTLY TO THE BISHOP

*"A frog he would a-wooing go;  
'Heigh ho!' says Roly."*

*—Old Nursery Rhyme*

### I

“SUSAN!”

A whistle rang down the long hall of the old house on Washington Square, and young Harry Armstrong, his hands clutched nervously in the pockets of his dinner coat, gazed eagerly toward the closed door of the dining-room awaiting a reply.

In a moment the door opened gingerly and a fair haired girl of sixteen poked her head out cautiously as though to get the lay of the land.

“Is that you, Harry? Did you call?” asked the girl, closing the door behind her and coming toward him.

### II

"Yes, of course it's me," cried the young man ungrammatically. "Come along in here. I want to talk to you. It's important, too," he added as he led the way into his grandfather's study. "So shut the door behind you and come and sit down here. I'll have just time to tell you before Grandpa comes in. Promise, though, that you won't tell him a word about it. I'll do that later on myself. Only you can always do what you like with him so well that I thought I'd have you on my side first — to make sure, don't you know? A fellow can't even be perfectly sure of his own sister when he starts to tell her a thing like this."

"Well, what on earth is it, Harry?" exclaimed Susan apprehensively. "Don't tell me you've been sent down from college again; because if you have it will simply break Grandpa's heart."

"No! no! It's nothing like that," laughed the boy, rather enjoying the girl's suspense. Placing his hands behind his back and striking rather an important attitude as he stood on the hearth rug, he went on: "All I ask you is not to cry or do anything silly. Because it's really a grand piece

of news. I know you'll think so once you get used to it. You've always been such a bully pal to me, old girl, in all my scrapes that I know you're going to stick by me in this one. I just want you to break the ice for me with Grand-father."

"Yes; that's all very well, Harry. But how am I going to break the ice if you don't tell me what's the matter?"

"Oh, I'll tell you right enough!" exclaimed young Armstrong. "Only promise me you won't make a fuss, Susan. And please, for heaven's sake, don't cry. For Grandpa will be in here in a moment, and then he'll see your nose is red and he'll want to know all about it and the fat will be in the fire before I get a chance to tell it to him properly and in my own way."

"Don't worry about Grandpa. He's safe for ten minutes at least. Some of the deaconesses from the old church, St. Giles's, have just called to wish him a Happy New Year. And you know how it is when he gets talking with his old friends, Harry. They'll 'reminisce' for half an hour at least. What on earth is it, Harry? Tell me."

"Well, Susan," young Armstrong began impressively, while he stroked his back hair with one hand, "perhaps I'd better break it to you in pieces. In the first place, Susan, I'm engaged."

"Engaged! To be married! And to that girl — to Lucille Anderson? Oh, Harry!" exclaimed Susan all in one breath.

"Why do you say 'that girl,' Susan?" asked her brother sternly.

"Oh, I didn't mean anything by that, Harry — really I didn't. Just give me half a second to get used to it. I think she's awfully pretty and the one time I met her, the day you introduced us at the skating rink, I thought her hair was perfectly lovely and she's got a pretty voice. In fact I liked her voice even better than her hair. It seemed more real."

"Good Lord! What cats you women can be to each other when you feel inclined. That's just your nasty way of insinuating that Lucille's touched up her hair. And why shouldn't she touch up her hair if she wants to?" he proceeded indignantly as poor Susan strove to put in a word of explanation. "That remark was just what I

might have expected from any member of my family. I might have known! As a matter of fact she explained to me just why she 'touched up' her hair. She did it because she thought it would help her in her stage career. Her father was one of the best known lawyers in Toronto, Canada. I told you that, didn't I? And until a year ago, when her father died and left no money, she had never done a stroke of work in all her life. Naturally she chose the stage as a career because she is ambitious and artistic and has a temperament. Just because you and I happen to have been left plenty of money is no reason for us to jump on a poor girl who's had hard luck and is trying to earn an honest living. I know what you're really picking at. You're sore because I'm going to marry an actress."

"No, I'm not—that's not it a bit, Harry," expostulated Susan, getting indignant in her turn. "I can't imagine anything nicer than to have a real actress—someone who's won great triumphs in *Juliet* or *Camille* or *Zaza* or even one of the musical comedy girls such as the English nobility are always marrying—a woman like that would be

worth while having for a sister-in-law. I should adore her. And it would be a splendid thing for our family too — because as far as I can make out about our stock for the last hundred years or so we've had more bishops and deans and merchant princes on our family tree than is good for the blood. Simply because I'm not 'out' yet you needn't think, Harry, that I am not a woman of the world."

Young Susan threw her head up and stared at her brother with an affronted, injured air Mrs. Grundy herself could not have excelled.

"I'm not objecting to Lucille anyway," the girl protested. "And if I was it wouldn't be because she's an actress. That's just it, you see. She isn't one. She isn't an actress — she's only a school of acting actress. You told me so yourself, Harry. You said she was taking a three months students' course. As far as I can make out she's just a sweet, nice girl, just as respectable and just as humdrum and uninteresting as all the rest of us. If I was a man I might make up my mind to marry an actress, but you bet she'd have to be a celebrity."

"Well, that's a nice point of view for you to take, I must say," said Harry sneeringly. "It's a lucky thing you weren't born a boy or you'd have disgraced the family even before you got a chance of being sent down from college. I was prepared for you and Grandpa to raise Cain about my marrying an actress," he added loftily, "but by God! Susan, I never dreamed that a sister of mine would object to my marrying a woman who is well born and comes of the best people."

"That's just it, Harry. All the stupidest girls I know come from the best people. I may be an anarchist, Harry, but when I get a sister-in-law I want her to be someone worth while — a woman who has lived and done things and can help me to entertain dear old Grandpa in the evenings."

"Susan, you talk like a fool!" shouted her brother. "I'm amazed at you. But if you think that I'm going to allow Lucille to give up her career just because she's going to marry me you're very much mistaken. Do you know what I'm going to give my little girl for one of my wedding presents? The finest Shakespearian outfit that money can buy. She shall play Juliet and Lady

Macbeth and any other classics she wants to to her heart's content. And if she wants it she shall have her own theater, too. If she can't find one that suits her I'll build her one myself. Oh, I can afford it all right! You seem to forget that I come of age in February, and then not only Uncle Cornelius Van Tuyl's jolly old house but half his money comes to me."

"Harry!" cried his sister, springing up and kissing him, "I believe you really do love her after all. I was only half in earnest in what I said—I've always had such grand dreams of your marriage. I have always been so ambitious. But if you really love Lucille I don't care whether she's an actress or not. Take her off the stage and make even a fashionable woman of her if you like. We'll stand by you—Grandpa and I. At least I will—and I'll make Grandpa. As he gets older you know he gets easier and easier for me to manage. And I'll tell you something else about him, Harry—something that I've never suspected until very lately. And it's true too. I'm sure of it."

"What is it?" queried her brother,

"It's this — don't laugh now!" she leaned toward him half mysteriously and whispered, "*Grandpa has got a past!*"

## II

"Come off, Susan! You're talking through your hat! What! That dear old saint ever worldly or frolicsome? Don't you believe it. He was born good."

"Well, even saints, Harry, occasionally break through the traces or hit the ceiling. If you'd ever read your Balzac or your Dickens, you'd know that. But then you never cared a rap for novels, did you? That's where I've got all my knowledge of the world. They're the only antidote for a girl who was born the granddaughter of a bishop and who has to live not only with him, but according to his lights."

"Don't you believe it, Susan," said Harry in a superior tone. "You're an impressionable sentimental little fool; you know nothing of the world. You're just young Susan — that's all: just young. Try and live it down. I told

Grandpa that he should have forbidden you to read 'the Garden of Allah.' "

"Oh, pshaw, Harry, don't be an idiot. I'd have read it anyway. But about Grandpa — now just listen; what I've learned about him, I didn't get out of any book — it's just from intuition. It's one of those things that every woman knows, Harry — even when she's just a girl who's not 'out' like me.

"And by the way, Harry," exclaimed Susan suddenly changing the subject. "You tell Lucille for me, with my compliments, that when you are married and have got settled in the Van Tuyl mansion the very first thing which I'll expect her to do will be to give one grand terrific, 'bang up' coming out party for me. There's to be nothing diocesan or Girls-Friendly-Mothers'-Meeting about it, it's to be one magnificent grand splash with all the modern improvements, just the sort of glorious and magnificent affairs which old Great Uncle Cornelius Van Tuyl used to give two or three times a season. Grandpa went to one of his great parties once and even then, mind you, he was the rector of St. Giles. The only time

that he has ever spoken of it was one night when I started to read to him and there wasn't as much interesting foreign news as usual in the *Evening Post*. He was rather blue that night — you know how he gets sometimes when he goes to his desk and gets that little box out. I wonder what there is in that little box. He'll never let me look in it. I've always been dying and aching to — but I wouldn't do it for worlds. That's the most glorious thing of all the glorious things about Grandpa, — his sense of honor. And he judges everyone in that respect by himself. Don't you remember, Harry, years and years ago when we were children, it was Grandpa's sense of honor which cured us both of our pantry habit of stealing jam. Well, it was something he said one night about Uncle Cornie which made me first suspicious of Grandpa's past. You can't tell me, Harry! but somehow and somewhere he and Uncle Cornie were rival sweethearts. Who the woman was I've never been able to find out — and oh! Harry, if you only knew how I'd love to worm it out of him in an honorable way. At first I thought it was Adelina Patti. But I was wrong

there; I'm sure of that, for whenever he speaks of her wonderful voice there's always a 'but' in his praise of her. No lover ever uses the word 'but' when he's praising his lady love, Harry. You may have the advantage of me in being engaged; but at least I do know that; it wasn't Balzac nor Hichens taught me, in spite of all you say."

"No," Susan went on reflectively and with an assumption of wisdom far, far beyond her years, "Grandpa's sweetheart wasn't Patti; that I'm sure of! But she was an opera singer. I'll bet anything you like on that! I'd stake my life on it. Because from the day you bought him the Victrola for Christmas I noticed that he only cares for the old grand opera records. Wagner and all the German new school composers are like a red rag to a bull to Grandpa. I only turn them on for him very occasionally, just for punishment, when he hasn't been letting me have quite my own way. Only this afternoon when I was out I bought him a new record for a New Year's present. It's Destinn in the aria from 'Mignon.' He's told me lots of times that 'Mignon' was the opera he loved best.

"And there's something else I've found out about Grandpa lately, Harry," continued Susan as she curled herself up before the fireplace in the Bishop's big armchair. "You see, I've been keeping very close tab on him lately. He interests me tremendously, Harry, not only as the dearest old gentleman that ever lived, but as a curious specimen of a bygone age."

"Humph!" exclaimed Harry somewhat contemptuously. "What are you, anyway? An archæologist or a Sherlock Holmes? I always thought there was a good deal of the detective about you, Susan," he added laughingly. "But what's this other mystery you've solved about poor old Grandpa? If he could hear us talking him over like this I believe that, big as we are, he'd box the ears of both of us and send us off to bed."

"Well," replied Susan, "this is what I've discovered, Harry; I don't believe that his wife, Grandmama Armstrong, was really the great love of his life."

"What makes you think that?"

"Well, listen!" pursued Susan. "He's al-

ways telling us what a good woman his wife, Susan, was. Now a man who's been madly in love with a woman never speaks of her in that way. He might talk of the love of his life as anything from an angel to a sorceress, but he would never harp on the point, as Grandpa does, that she was so very good. Then besides the family Bible bears out my suspicions, Harry."

"Why, what's the family Bible got to do with it?"

"Well, I just thought I'd like to look it over," said Susan, somewhat with the air of a Missourian, "so I dug it out of the library the other day and made a careful study of it. That's where I made my discovery. And remember what I'm telling you now, Harry, must never get outside the family. You mustn't even tell Lucille about it if she becomes your wife. We must just regard it as one of our family skeletons and keep it locked up in the Van Tuyl closet."

"Great Scott, Susan! What was the scandal," said Harry, eagerly. "You're talking about poor old grandmother as though she had been as immoral as those two awful Lady Georges

that Grandpa always speaks of in a whisper—George Eliot and George Sand."

"Oh, no, she wasn't a bit like them," exclaimed Susan quickly, as though anxious to save her Grandmother's escutcheon from any undue blot. "Grandma was a married woman. The only trouble with her was she didn't marry until she was a very old woman, Harry. The record of her marriage says that she was thirty-two, and that wasn't the worst of it. Grandpa, when he married her, was only twenty-nine."

"Well, there's nothing immoral about that."

"Immoral! Of course not. Who said such a thing! But it's scarcely the sort of thing that one's grandparents would wish their younger generations to talk about. One thing I'm certain of, Harry, unless some man marries me before I'm thirty-two I shall either take the veil or become a beauty lecturer and sell cold creams for relaxation. However," continued Susan, becoming more serious, "the fact that Grandma was so much older than Grandpa proves conclusively to me that there had been some other woman in his life. My own opinion is that Grandma caught

him on the rebound. I don't suppose that we shall ever know the truth about it. But it's exceedingly interesting all the same. Then there's another thing. Sometimes when Grandpa's sitting by the fire here at night after I've finished reading the *Post* to him he will gaze into the fire for half an hour at a time, looking at the coals as intently as though he were seeing all his life there in the fireplace. The other night when he was sitting like that my curiosity got the better of me. I couldn't stand the silence any longer. So I said to him: 'What are you thinking about, Grandpa? What makes you look so sad?' And what do you think he said to me, Harry? He turned to me and shook his head and smiled in a whimsical sort of way and then he said: 'I was thinking, my dear Susan, of what a dreadful young prig I used to be before I married your grandmother. It's a horrible thing to be a prig, my dear, much worse, to my mind, than to be a sinner. Your friends will always forgive your sins, but they'll never forgive your priggishness. I was even worse than a prig, I think. I had all the arrogance and ignorance of youth combined with the

terrible, unquenchable enthusiasm of the fanatic. There were times in my youth, I fear, Susan, when both my family and friends must have found me a dreadful bore.' And then," continued the girl, "I thought he was going to open up and confide in me and tell me all about it. But instead he just closed those long, thin lips of his very firmly and smiled and shook his head. I couldn't get another word out of him. It was maddening. That's one of the things that most vex me about Grandpa, he never will quench my curiosity. But just as he was picking up his cane to start upstairs he did say this much, and he must have been thinking about the man all the time, for he hadn't mentioned his name for at least six months. As he stooped to kiss me good night he said: 'Susan, my dear, you and Harry have had at least one splendid ancestor. I am speaking of your grandmother's uncle, Cornelius Van Tuyl. His was the biggest, noblest nature I have ever known; he was a man of the world. A man of the wide, wide world, my dear. There's a difference in those two phrases which some day, perhaps when you're older, you'll appreciate. But as for me

I shall always honor the memory of Cornelius Van Tuyl and blush each time — and I am still able to blush, thank God — when I remember how I misjudged him.' So you see, Harry, from those few remarks," concluded Susan sententiously, "I have gathered that at some time in their careers Grandpa and Uncle Cornelius must have had a frightful row. And it must have been about a woman, because after all, when you come down to it, women are the only things that men fight about really seriously. And now for me, Harry, as they say in the novels, it's a case of '*cherchez la femme.*' And I'll find her too, even if I have to give dear old Grandpa the third degree."

## III

"Susan, you talk like an idiot," exclaimed young Armstrong patronizingly. "However, when I take possession of the Van Tuyl mansion, if I find any ancient records in the safe I'll let you have a peep at them if they're not too scandalous. But shut up now about Grandpa's love affairs. Listen to mine. I've only told you half my news

and the old gentleman will be here in a minute."

"Well, what on earth have you wasted all this time for, Harry?" retorted Susan. "That's the worst of you — you never can keep to the point. What's the rest of it?"

The boy hesitated for a moment; he waggled one of his legs nervously to and fro and avoided his young sister's eye.

"Well, I told you that I was engaged to Lucille, didn't I? We've settled that point."

"Go on," insisted Susan.

"Well — I'm the sort of man, Susan, who doesn't believe in a long engagement. Father ran away and got married, you know, before he was twenty-one."

"Yes, and by doing so he almost broke poor Grandpa's heart," rejoined the girl instantly. "It was perfectly shameful of him; I have never been able quite to forgive father for that. If you were to do a thing like that, Harry, I'd never speak to you again. Because you know, now that we're orphans, I really believe Grandpa loves you and me better than if we were children of his very own."

"Well, don't worry; I'm not going to break his heart again. That's why I'm here to-night. That's why I'm coming in later to have a talk with him. And that's why I want you, Susan, to use a little diplomacy in the meanwhile and get him into one of his gentlest and most benevolent moods. Because what I'm going to tell him is this — Susan. I'm going to marry Lucille to-morrow afternoon at 4 o'clock."

"To-morrow," cried Susan, springing to her feet. "Why, you're mad, Harry; what on earth's the hurry? Besides to-morrow's New Year's Day. Oh, you mustn't do it; if you spring a thing like that on Grandpa to-night why, it will spoil the whole new year for him. Only to-night he was saying that he would remember dear old 1912 as one of the happiest years of his life just because you and I have been so much with him and helped to keep him young. And now you'd go and kill 1913 for him by doing such a crazy thing as this. Grandpa's always said that thirteen was his unlucky number anyway. I think you a beast, Harry, if you do. Wait until February anyway; give the poor girl time to get her

trousseau. If Lucille agrees to any such plan as this the least that I can say about her is that she's a little designing cat."

"Leave Lucille out of this, if you please. This is all my doing," cried Harry, angrily. "Lucille's behaved like a perfect angel. Why, she even says that she won't consider herself engaged to me until Grandpa's given his consent."

"Well, I don't care! I think it's simply abominable of you, Harry. I won't raise a finger to help you now. I won't put in one good word with —"

Unheard by the brother and sister, the door of the study had opened noiselessly and the old Bishop, leaning on his walking stick, stood smiling at them both.

"Why, what's the matter, youngsters?" he exclaimed cheerily. "What's this, another war in the Balkans or merely a duel of the Armstrongs? Surely you're not coming to blows on New Year's."

"It's nothing to be alarmed about, Grandpa," gasped Susan hurriedly. "Just a little family tiff. You see," she added with a significant smile, which instantly brought a scowl of rage to the features

of young Harry, "we were rowing about a New Year's present which Harry insists on giving me. But I haven't made up my mind yet whether I'm going to like it or not. However, it was sweet of you to think of me, darling," she added as she kissed Harry. "Run along, now, for Grandpa and I have heaps of things to talk about, and we haven't read our *Evening Post*."

"I won't be long, sir," said Harry, turning to his grandfather. "I'm just going to 'phone to Tyson's for some theater tickets for to-morrow night. The theaters are so crowded on New Year's I suppose I'll have to go to the speculators anyway."

"For to-morrow night, Harry?" exclaimed Susan, taken unawares. "Why, I thought you and Lucille had another engagement."

"Oh, but that's for the afternoon," retorted Harry. "That engagement is for four o'clock, Susan, and don't you forget it," he added meaningfully as he walked toward the door.

"Really!" exclaimed Susan, lifting her eyebrows. "Then in that case, Harry, let your little sister do another good turn for you."

She picked up an evening paper from the table and hurriedly turned to the amusement column.

"Let me suggest an appropriate play for you two. Ah, yes, here's the very thing"—as she ran her finger down the column. "'Years of Discretion.'"

"Thanks very much, old girl," cried Harry as he prepared to slam the door behind him. "But we've picked out our play already. We're going to the 'Honeymoon Express.'"

"Who is this Lucille Anderson that Harry is always talking about lately?" asked the Bishop as, hobbling across the room on his walking stick, he let himself down gingerly into his armchair. "Do you know her?"

"Oh, yes indeed, Grandpa," replied Susan with well simulated enthusiasm; "she's a perfect darling. I'm crazy about her. She's such a sweet girl, with the loveliest voice and hair. And she's got such a splendid influence over Harry. He's sobered down tremendously since he met her. She's a girl of such high ideals. Her father was one of the greatest lawyers in Toronto, Canada. But he's dead now and poor Lucille is very poor

and has got to go out in the world and make her own living."

"Humph!" said the Bishop. "I hope she's not a suffragette. You're a very subtle little person," he continued, smiling at her questioningly. "From a remark that you let fall just now I gathered that you consider either Lucille or Harry rather light headed."

"What on earth do you mean, Grandpa?" said Susan, blushing furiously.

"That play which you suggested they should go to. Tell me, my dear, why did you pick out 'Years of Discretion'?"

"Oh, just because the title sounded interesting," added Susan lightly. "It was the first one I saw in the list."

Then, by way of turning the subject, she added quickly, "But come along, Grandpa, we haven't read the paper yet. Shall I begin?"

"Very well, my dear, just as you like," said the Bishop placidly.

Susan complied with a slight yawn. "'Regulation of Skyscrapers.' 'Drastic Measures to Be Taken by President Taft.' 'Earthquake in Apia

— Thousands Reported Killed.’ ‘Borough President Gives to Board of Estimate the Report on Improvements.’ Oh, dear! it sounds awfully dull to-night, doesn’t it?” said Susan, looking up from the paper for a moment. “That’s the worst about newspapers. They’re so uninteresting except in the society column or when there’s an elopement or a divorce case. They never have anything about anything one knows. That’s why I’d so much rather read novels. Because in a novel, you know, you always get to know everybody in it intimately before you are half way through the book. Were you ever fond of Ouida, Grandpa?”

“Ouida!” repeated the old gentleman as though striving vainly to recall some memory. “I seem to recall the name. But what was it, my dear, a tooth powder? Ah, no; I recollect now. Let me see, wasn’t he that automatic checker player that never lost a game?”

Susan burst out laughing.

“Oh, no, Grandpa; you’re all mixed up. That fellow was Ajeeb. He’s still living. They’ve got him over in the Eden Musee. But Ouida was a

great novelist — a great lady novelist, you know. Like those two women whose books you've forbidden me to read, George Eliot and George Sand. Ouida wrote 'Under Two Flags' away back in the '60s or '70s somewhere. The reason I asked you about her was because in that old diary of Grandmamma's you showed me the other day there was quite a piece about her. Grandmamma was evidently quite as dotty about Cigarette and Bertie Cecil as I am. For in one place she writes: 'It is now nearly four in the morning and I have just concluded reading Ouida's 'Under Two Flags,' surreptitiously, for the second time. I consider this book the most marvelous literary achievement of our era. It has provided me with the greatest sentimental treat of my life. I only wish I could persuade dear Tom to read it. It would certainly broaden his point of view."

"She was an omnivorous reader, your grandmother, Susan," said the Bishop in a reminiscent tone. "We used to have many little squabbles about her books. I never approved of novels myself, they seemed to me such a waste of time. But

as I say, your grandmother always took a much wider point of view of life than I. You see, for one thing she was brought up in a rather different world. She was left an orphan almost in her babyhood and lived with her uncle, old Cornelius Van Tuyl. She was brought up in the great house, which is soon to be Harry's now. Old Van Tuyl, you know, was a very famous person in his way; quite the Ward McAllister of his period, though to my mind a much more liberal minded man. His house was the meeting place, not of society alone but of all the noted men and women of his day. He believed in the aristocracy of brains, my dear. I have met Charles Dickens frequently at his house. Now, there was a real novelist for you, my dear. I have always found his books most interesting, for even when he dealt with the lowest types of life his works had always a moral and uplifting tone."

"Oh, I shouldn't have cared a rap about meeting Dickens," remarked Susan loftily. "I think his whiskers, which you see in all the pictures of him, were simply hideous. But tell me, Grandpa,

you who are so fond of all the old operas, didn't you ever meet any of the great singers or actresses at his house?"

"A great many of them frequented his house, my dear, but I met comparatively few. You see, Susan," continued the Bishop with a whimsical smile, "I was never what you young people call a society man. I was the rector of St. Giles's in those days and almost completely absorbed in my church and mission work, sometimes I think too much so for my own good. If I had my life to live all over again I should take a broader view, both of affairs and men. But we live and learn, my dear; we live and learn. I can see clearly now that in many instances my point of view was extremely narrow."

"But, Grandpa," said Susan, "surely you can remember some of the names of these great women that you met at Uncle Van Tuyl's. Did Adelina Patti ever go there? Did you ever meet her?"

"Oh, yes, frequently. Uncle Cornelius's house was the only private residence at which she ever sang in New York. It was a great honor, to be

sure. I remember the night well. Your grandmother did the honors. 'His little Chatelaine,' Uncle Cornelius used to call her proudly. And she certainly made a charming hostess. Watching you as you preside at my dinner table always makes me think of her, my dear. I'm so glad you bear her name of Susan. You have so many traits in common, though I must confess," he went on laughingly, "you are really prettier than my dear Susan ever was. Susan's hair was quite straight. She was never what one might term a beauty, but she had charm, my dear; incomparable charm. How she would have envied those crinkly little curls of yours, Susan," continued the old man smilingly as he ran his fingers playfully through his granddaughter's curls. "That was always a very sore point with my poor Susan — my curly hair. She used to laugh and say that there ought to be a law against it, some law which would prevent men from being born with hair which curled naturally, while poor women had to keep their hair in curl papers half the night. And then it wouldn't stay crimped for more than an hour or two. It's a very small thing for an old

man to remember, I suppose, little Susan," sighed the Bishop. "But I was always secretly delighted at the pride which your grandmother took in my hair. It would have proved a severe trial to me had I ever grown bald."

## IV

The girl rose and went to her grandfather. There were tears in her eyes as she leaned lovingly over him and, stooping, kissed one of his snow white curls.

"And if she could see them now she'd be prouder of them than ever, Grandpa. They were never so beautiful. I shall always pray that if I live to be an old woman I shall have just such curls as yours."

"They were almost the only thing I was ever vain about," pursued the Bishop as he patted Susan on the cheek. "Otherwise I was never in the least a dandy. I was always so absorbed in my work that I never thought about my clothes. I was a dreadfully untidy person, I'm afraid. It used to worry Susan a great deal. I remember how she used always to be picking bits of fluff

off my shoulder. And sometimes even when I had remembered to do so I used purposely to leave my hair unbrushed because I always knew that at the first sight of me she would put my curls in place with her dear hand. She had such beautiful hands, Susan," the old man went on enthusiastically. "They were her greatest beauty. Just now, when you touched me on the forehead, it gave me quite a little start, Susan. And your voice, too, it is so like hers."

"Really, Grandpa, I'm so proud to know that. But you're just flattering me to evade my question. Tell me, didn't you ever meet any of the great actresses at Uncle Van Tuyl's?"

"If I did I have forgotten their names, my dear. You see, I never approved of the theater. And there was only one very short period in my life, when I frequented it, and even that was under protest. I went there simply to oblige a very charming woman to whom the theater was a great source of rest and recreation."

Susan was now hot on the trail.

"What was her name, Grandpa? Do tell me."

"Let me answer your question first, my dear,"

smiled the old gentleman evasively. " You were asking me about the theater and what I knew of it. So I'm going to tell you a little story — about the first time I ever stepped inside of one. It was in the gallery at Niblo's Garden in — let me see; let me think "— and the Bishop cudgeled his brains for a moment. " Yes, it was in '66. A very notorious play was running there then. They called it 'The Black Crook.' "

Susan jumped from her perch on the arm of her grandfather's chair and clapped her hands.

" Why, Grandpa! " she cried, unable to restrain her delight. " Do you mean to tell me with your own lips that you were a gallery god and went to see 'The Black Crook'? Why, even I've heard about how awfully broad it was. I was reading about it only the other day in an old book in your library called ' Sunlight and Shadow.' "

The Bishop began to explain hurriedly.

" I was only there for a very short time. To be exact, not more than four minutes. I went there, not out of curiosity but with a very laudable purpose. I left the very moment that I had achieved it. I had discovered, by accident, one

Saturday afternoon that two of my youngest and most promising choir boys, who had had their imagination excited by the flaming posters and the inflammatory articles in the daily newspapers, which, while they were supposedly denouncing, were in reality exploiting 'The Black Crook'—I heard by accident, I say, that these two youngsters had expended their pocket money in gallery tickets for the performance. I had a meeting of the deaconesses at the rectory that afternoon, but I lost no time in dismissing them and I hurried to the theater. If those young lads had been inside a burning building I could not have rushed to save them at any greater speed. I tore up the gallery stairs; and just as I entered for one brief moment I caught my one glimpse of the stage. I must confess, to be fair, that the scene I saw was very beautiful and not at all demoralizing. If the rest of the performance, which, of course, I did not see, was of an equal artistic caliber, I should have always claimed that 'The Black Crook' had been misjudged. But from all I heard and gathered afterward it appears to me that I must have arrived at the one psychological

moment when the play was above reproach. The stage was empty except for one figure — a beautiful young woman dressed in very short white tarlatan ballet skirts. She was standing apparently on one toe. Her arms were waving gracefully in the air above her head, and as I stood, entranced and forgetful of my boys for the moment, she executed the most graceful series of postures imaginable. She was, I discovered afterward what is called the '*premiere danseuse absoluta.*' Her name was Louise Bonfanti."

"What!" cried Susan, in amazement. "You don't mean the little, graceful, fat, old, Italian dancing teacher, who still gives lessons uptown! Why, Grandpa, I've met her. Why last year when we got up the kirmess for the working girls' home she stage managed all our dances for us. I know her well."

"And so do I," replied the Bishop, looking his granddaughter smilingly in the eye: "that's the reason I told you the story. But let me finish it; it's got a moral. Well, I caught my boys, dragged them home, gave them a sound scolding and set them to reading 'Tales of a Grandfather'

for punishment. That I thought was the end of the matter, but it wasn't by a very long way." And the Bishop wagged his head deprecatingly at the reminiscence. "The next morning to my amazement, the newspapers were ablaze with the story. I remember some of those headlines even yet, my dear. The *Herald* ran, 'Fervid young rector plucks two boyish brands from the burning.' The *Sun* said, 'The Rev. Thomas Armstrong defies the gods and rescues two of his choir boys from the wiles of Bonfanti.' Even the *Evening Post*, which you're holding in your hand now, my dear, devoted several lines to the matter, and was the only paper in all New York which entirely upheld me in my peremptory action. The other papers as a rule rather favored the boys. Persons who understand theatrical matters always insisted afterward — your Uncle Van Tuyl in particular, I remember — that I was the innocent cause of the success of 'The Black Crook.' However, I think that was an exaggeration," smiled the Bishop. "I should scarcely like to have that crime upon my conscience. But from all I read of theatrical performances to-day, my

dear, I think that by comparison the poor old 'Crook' would seem quite insipid. But to my story! Mme. Bonfanti achieved a world-wide reputation, as you know. I had not heard her name mentioned for more than thirty years, when only a few months ago, when I was attending a meeting of the working girls' home, it happened that a number of the young women were rehearsing for some sort of benefit. They seemed to be learning a dance of some kind, when suddenly I happened to hear one of them refer to their instructress as Mme. Bonfanti. I turned and looked at her closely. There was no mistake. It was she. I recognized her instantly. The youth was gone and the tarlatan skirts, but from behind her spectacles there still gleamed those wonderful eyes. There was still a fire and an elusive charm in them. And though, to be sure, she was stout, she was still graceful in her movements. And then her gestures! Each time she moved her little gloved hand it was the epitome of grace. And then I thought of my sciatic back, my dear, and my old creaky knee joints, and I groaned inwardly and I said to myself: 'There

must be some hidden secret of youth, known only to the stage, which keeps its votaries so young. I wish we poor, crippled old clergy could fathom it.' "

" But didn't you speak to her? Didn't you even say how d'ye do? Why, how rude, Grandpa, after all these years!"

" But, remember, we had never met before. How could I speak to her? We had never been introduced. But at all events she forestalled me. The moment the young women whispered who I was she turned upon me beamingly and held out both her hands. The curtsey which she dropped me, Susan, was exquisite in its grace. Bowing's a lost art in these days, it seems to me. And as she held her hands out and smiled so radiantly she said, in her pretty broken English — I have always been very fond of broken English when it is spoken by a woman with a musical voice — ' My dear Bishop,' she cried. ' All my life — ever since the time I was eighteen year old and played in "The Black Crook" at Niblo's Garden — I have prayed and hoped for the great honor of meeting you. I have watch your career with the

ver-ry greta interest, and when many, many year ago they made you a Bishop I was oh, so proud, so proud! Without you, my dear Bishop, La Bonfanti might have become just only a memory, instead of as I am now, an institution.' Then we laughed and chatted for some moments and finally as we shook hands and said good-by she laughed and called after me, ' Remembair, Bishop, I have those newspaper sleepings yet.' "

## V

" I merely mentioned this little incident to you, my dear, to show you how, with the best intentions in the world, one may misjudge another in this life," pursued the Bishop. " My one short actual meeting with Mme. Bonfanti completely upset all my mental conceptions of her. All her life she had probably been thinking of me as some mad, intolerant, religious fanatic, while to me she had always remained that radiant young creature in the tarlatan skirts, standing on one toe. I may, in my arrogance, have regarded her as a lost soul, but now that we have met I think we both know better. Each has changed the estimate of the

other somewhat, perhaps. Old age levels many prejudices. But I should like to know how she keeps so young."

"And the two choir boys, Grandpa?" interrupted Susan. "What became of them? Did they survive 'Tales of a Grandfather,' or did they live unhappy ever after from being thus deprived of 'The Black Crook'?"

"Strangely enough a year or two later, my dear child, these very boys, unknown to themselves, saved your grandfather from a far worse fate than would have befallen them if they had witnessed a score of performances of 'The Black Crook.' They were still in my choir at St. Giles's and oddly enough to-day is the anniversary of the occurrence. It took place on New Year's eve, 1868. In those days we celebrated the coming of the new year more quietly than you do now. The chimes were always rung at old Trinity and the streets were thronged with merry-makers as they are now. But the whistles and the tin horns were not so much in evidence. You see we followed more the fashion of the old English 'Waits.' The choirs from the different churches

would, in long procession, march through the city streets singing carols. It was a pretty old custom and it ushered in the new year with a greater show of respect and reverence than usually greets it now."

"But what happened that night, Grandpa?"

"My dear," said the Bishop somewhat shortly, "it's not a story for your pretty little girlish ears. You asked about the choir boys and I mentioned this incident just to show you, as the old hymn says, that 'God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform.' Come, now, let us have some music."

"The incident is closed," sighed Susan to herself. Then aloud she asked, "What record shall we start with, Grandpa? '*Caro Nome?*'"

"Anything you like, dear, so long as it isn't too sad," said the Bishop.

Susan adjusted the record and opened wide the two little doors of the Victrola.

"Listen, Grandpa!" cried the girl as she stood aside to listen. "Isn't that a splendid record?"

"Yes; it is rather a fine voice," said the old gentleman. "Who is the singer?"

"Why, Grandpa! Do you mean to say you don't recognize that voice? It's *Tetrazzini*," answered Susan and her voice took on a tone of almost reverence.

"She has a good method and some fine notes," said the Bishop, turning musical critic for a moment. "Ah! my dear, you should have heard Adelina Patti sing it at the Academy in '72. That was a marvelous voice of hers; she was a wonderful artist, Mme. Patti; with one exception the most wonderful singer I ever heard."

"And who was that, Grandpa?" asked his granddaughter eagerly.

"Oh, don't think I am decrying Patti for a moment," replied the Bishop, quite ignoring Susan's query. "From a technical point of view I suppose her singing was perfect, but, to my mind, there was a certain tenderness and warmth lacking in her voice which always made the singing of Margarita Cavallini quite incomparable to me."

"Oh, but, Grandpa," protested Susan with some fire, "you don't mean to tell me, young as I am, that our Melbas and Destinns and Farrars aren't every bit as fine singers as your Cavallinis

and your Pattis and your Grisis. While as for Caruso — now you must know perfectly well, Grandpa, that there never has been such a tenor since the world began. Everyone admits that!"

The Bishop smiled and shook his head with an air of unconverted pride.

"My dear," he said, "you must remember *I* have heard Mario."

Susan, squelched for the moment, had no word to say. Experience had taught her that there were certain subjects upon which it was just as well not to argue with her grandfather. So for a few moments the old man and the girl listened to "*Caro Nome*" in silence.

The clock on the study mantelpiece chimed the half hour after ten and the Bishop in his easy chair gave a deep sigh as though the striking of the chimes had just recalled to him how fast the old year, 1912, was hurrying to its close.

As the record wheezed its way into silence the Bishop sighed again and said:

"What a pity it is, Susan, that Thomas Edison could not have been born fifty years earlier. Think, my dear, of the voices which this great in-

vention of his might have preserved imperishable for all posterity. There were vocal giants in my day, Susan — golden nightingales now silenced forever or, more tragic yet, cracked and broken with the rust of age. I remember once some fifteen or twenty years ago, when the phonograph was first perfected, reading in some newspaper a very pretty little story about one of your new singers — Emma Calvé, I think it was. She had left the man she was engaged to behind in Paris when she came here and every week when the mail boat came in she shut herself up in her hotel apartments just to listen to his voice. For, you see, they corresponded entirely by phonograph; they talked and sang all their love letters to each other week by week. And ever since I read that newspaper paragraph I have thought what an inestimable joy it would have brought to an old man like me if by just opening the two little doors of that Victrola and adjusting the waxen scroll I could have heard once more those dear dead voices of my youth. I don't mean only the great dead voices; I mean the voices which were nearest and dearest to me — your grandmother's, for

instance. How I should love at this very moment to hear her singing her favorite hymn! She had a very sweet contralto voice, had Susan; but she played wretched accompaniments, poor dear. I suppose that was because she studied at that Springler Institute, of which I never approved."

"What was the hymn, Grandpa?" asked Susan gently.

"It was one of the old Ancient and Modern, and it had a low setting, which suited her voice extremely well. I can almost hear her singing it now."

The Bishop drew a long breath and began to hum as though half to himself:

Christian, dost thou see them  
On the Holy Ground?  
How the troops of Midian  
Prowl and prowl around?  
Christian, up and smite them,  
Counting gain but loss;  
Smite them by the merit  
Of the Holy Cross.

The Bishop's voice died away slowly. Presently Susan turned to him and asked: "What were the troops of Midian, Grandpa? That's

one of the strange things about hymns to me. I've known them so long and I've sung them so often that I never know what I'm singing about. Tell me! Who and what were the troops of Midian? For honestly, Grandpa, to tell you the truth, ever since I was about nine years old and you taught me that hymn I've always thought of them as being a sort of Old Testament comic opera company which Moses or Methuselah or some other old patriarch had told to keep off the grass."

The Bishop burst out laughing in spite of himself.

"To tell you the truth, Susan, when I was a youngster that was just about my opinion of them, too. Later, of course, when I grew older and more bigoted, we'll say, the troops of Midian came to mean any group of worldly people or even those theologians who differed with my religious points of view."

"That means about everybody who wasn't an Episcopalian, eh, Grandpa?" remarked Susan.

"At one time — perhaps, my dear," admitted the Bishop. "But as I grew older and came

more and more under the influence of your grandmother I learned to take a wider and more altruistic point of view."

"And now, Grandpa," cried Susan, springing up gayly, "it seems to me it's about time I gave you my New Year's present. I didn't know what on earth to get you, so what do you suppose I got? And do you know why I got it for you, Grandpa?" she went on unheedingly. "I tried to think of something which would make you very, very soft and sentimental — something that would put you almost in a Bavarian cream sort of mood."

"My dear child, I assure you," laughed the Bishop, "that's almost my condition. I'm just running over the sides of the dish, little Miss Twentieth Century."

"That's a new name! Why do you call me that?" and Susan forgot all about the present for the moment.

"Because, my dear, you have always represented the twentieth century to me. That was the first name I ever called you. You probably don't remember it, Susan, but you were the first living

thing I laid my eyes on New Year's morning, 1900. You must have been a little over two, Susan, just able to toddle about comfortably by yourself and show your old grandfather the way he should go in this new century to which he doesn't seem quite to belong."

"But do you mean to say, Grandpa, you never saw me until I was as old as that? And Harry — why, Harry must have been seven by then, at least. Do you mean to say you had never seen either of us when we were real babies?"

"Never, dear. That has been the bitterest punishment of my life, Susan — the loss of both your babyhoods. That's one reason why I've tried so hard to make up to both of you since, my dear. I have never spoken of this matter to either of you for fear it would make you hate me. Sometimes I think that Harry suspects the truth, Susan. Bear with me and forgive me as well as you can."

For censure the young girl snuggled on the arm of his chair and kissed his white curls reassuringly.

Clearing his voice the Bishop went on slowly: "I was sitting in this very chair, Susan, when one

night, my Harry — your father that was to be — rushed in here and without any preparation told me that he had run away and got married. I was furious. There was a quarrel — in which I know now I was entirely in the wrong. Harry went out of the room slamming the door behind him and declaring he would never enter my home again. He never did, poor boy — that was all my fault too. He and your mother went to New Orleans, where he got employment. Little Harry was born there and so were you. But even the coming of you children did not melt the frost which had gathered round my heart. It was not until the yellow fever carried off your father and your mother within three days of each other that I realized the enormity of what I had done. I sent for you at once. I was very ill when you arrived on New Year's eve. Remorse, contrition and the righteous wrath of the Almighty had laid me low. That afternoon, ill as I was, I made the nurse carry me from my bedroom into the study here, for every new year since my marriage I had seen dawn in this old room. They made a bed for me on the couch and the nurse

left me. I was sleeping soundly long before the old year had passed out and when I woke the sun was shining in the windows and the new century was just six hours old. Before I could move or even mentally salute the new year there was a gentle tap at my door. 'Come in,' I said. The door was opened just a chink and I saw the nurse's hand push you gently inside. The door closed to and there you stood, dear, with one finger stuck debatingly in your mouth. For a moment we two looked silently at each other, and there was such a look of unconscious mercy and of tenderness in your sweet eyes that I always felt that, all unconsciously, perhaps, you knew all and forgave me everything even then. 'I'm your little Toosan,' you said by way of introduction, and feeble as I was I limped from my bed toward you and I gathered you into my arms, crying, 'You're my little New Century, my dear!'

"And ever since," continued the Bishop, "for twelve years now — you have guided this poor relic of an older era through the mazes of your new century. I feel like a stranger within your gates. And I have watched you grow and blos-

som, dear, and thanked God that I had you here to keep me within your gentle leading strings. For what should I do without you, Susan; what should I do without you? You are my eyes when I tire of reading; it is you who soothes my ears at night with all the old songs I love — for even if you do not actually sing them to me you manipulate the Victrola better than anyone else can. But it's when I'm out, at large in this great maelstrom which they call New York now — it's then that I miss and appreciate you most. It's then that I feel lost and all at sea. The taxis make me nervous, the rush and the swirl of Broadway bewilders me completely. And then the old landmarks — all gone, my dear, all gone! Look at Union Square! Tiffany's, Brentano's, both flown uptown; Springer Institute vanished completely; the old Everett House has been razed so long — four or five years at least! — that you young people have forgotten that there ever was such a famous hostelry, just as you are quite unconscious of the fact that once upon a time Union Square boasted a high iron railing. Only the other day, just before Christmas, I walked slowly up Fifth avenue and turned

west at Fourteenth street to go to Macy's to buy my gifts as I have done for nearly fifty years—Macy's was gone, my dear. There was no trace left of the old shop. I should have remembered that they had moved uptown years ago. But I had forgotten. It gave me almost a shock when I realized it. I felt that I had lost still another old friend and, walking home again, feeling quite disconsolate, the one sight which was left to gladden my heart was the old Van Buren mansion, standing serene and staunch, like some stately dowager, oblivious of all its commercial neighbors and its dingy surroundings. I clutched the iron fence with a vigorous clasp. It was like shaking hands with an old comrade whom I hadn't seen since the war. And then when I turn my eyes heavenward those dreadful skyscrapers obliterate all the dear old spires. St. Giles's steeple still holds its own but its contemporary, St. George's, has been shorn of both its old brown towers. You can't see the time of day on Stuyvesant Square any more unless you have a watch! Then when I go to Staten Island it's the same story. Why, it's all that my poor old eyes can do to iden-

tify the Produce Exchange building — once the proudest edifice on the water front — from the forest of skyscrapers that surround it."

"But there's Liberty, Grandpa," exclaimed Susan. "Don't forget our Lady of the Eternal Torch."

"Quite true. She is still there, my dear — and the sea! God bless the sea. It has its moods and tenses; but it's always there. It does not go in for innovations."

"Grandpa, I don't think it's good for you to 'look back' so much. What do you say to hearing my present. I had almost forgotten it. It's the latest Destinn. You know, as I told you just now," pursued Susan, "I've got some news to tell you, and before I break it to you I want you to be very, very *soft*. I have an idea this will make you so."

Susan began to hum "*Connais — tu le pays*," very softly to herself as she adjusted the record. Then as Destinn's voice swelled out in the German version of the song the girl paused to watch the melody's effect upon her grandfather.

"*Kennst du so wohl?*"

"Please, please, Susan! not that song," he cried almost irritably. "It's been running in my head all day for some reason or other. Stop it, Susan — please! It makes me sad. I may be very foolish, but I would rather not hear it to-night."

Susan stopped the record abruptly.

"I'm so sorry. I thought you'd like it, Grandpa. I picked it out especially for you, because you've always said you were so fond of 'Mignon.' I went to the trouble, too, of looking it up in 'The Prima Donna's Album' just to learn what it meant in English. But the words are awfully stupid translated, don't you think?"

Knowest thou that fair land  
Where the oranges grow  
Where the fruit is of gold  
And so fair the rose?

Now to me that sounds awfully flat, perfectly asinine. I don't wonder it makes you melancholy. But who was it used to sing it in your day, Grandpa?" went on the girl inquisitively. "Let me see now! What *was* her name? Sounds something like our own Cavallera? Ah! yes,

*Cavallini*; that was it. Was she very wonderful, Grandpa?"

"Matchless. Incomparable," said the Bishop rather shortly. "Suppose, now, for a change, my dear, we have a little of Harry What's-his-name. You know the man I mean — the Scotchman."

"Harry Lauder? Certainly," said Susan, discarding the hapless "Mignon" record and putting the Scotchman's most famous ditty in its place. "This ought to cheer you as well as a cocktail, Grandpa. Listen!"

I love a lassie,  
A bonnie, bonnie lassie,  
She's as pure as the lily in the dell:  
She's as sweet as the heather,  
The bonnie purple heather,  
Mary, my Scotch bluebell!

The swing of the song, its lilting rhythm and the quaint side remarks of the Scotchman between the verses worked marvels with the Bishop's dol-drums. They vanished like a mist before the sun.

Susan sighed to herself profoundly as one who had accomplished something in the way of a mir-

acle as she saw the smiles breaking out on the old man's happy face.

The Bishop kept time to the music with his cane and also with his least rheumatic foot. Presently he grew bolder and joined bravely in the chorus. At his request Susan turned the record on for the second time.

"And you a Bishop of the Episcopal Church applauding a Presbyterian like that! Why, Grandpa, I'm amazed at you."

"It's a very good song and it's very well sung. I should like to shake hands with Mr. Lauder one of these days. It seems to me that he must be a man of a very liberal nature and jovial disposition — the Tony Pastor of Scotland, as it were."

"Well, there's a new one on me!" exclaimed Susan. "I never heard *his* name before. Who was he, Grandpa, this Tony Pastor? A basso or a pantomime man?"

The Bishop shrugged his shoulders as one without hope.

"Oh, my dear. Are you really serious? And he not dead ten years! Is it possible that the

children of this generation don't know the name of Tony Pastor? Such is fame!"

## VI

"Never mind telling me about him now, Grandpa," interrupted Susan, as the Bishop was about to explain. "I have something to say to you, dear — something which I'm afraid you are not going to like very much, Grandpa. I've been trying to break it gently to you all the evening."

The Bishop smiled and looked at Susan rather curiously.

"I like everything. It's my greatest fault!"

"Well, I like that!" laughed Susan. "What about Wagner?"

"Ah! yes. Everything, except Wagner. You are quite right, Susan. Wagner I cannot stand."

"Well, I doubt if you can stand this either."

"Suppose you give me a try."

"Well — it's about Harry."

"Harry!" echoed the Bishop. "What about Harry?"

"He's gone and done it."

Susan decided to rush matters. She poured out the balance of her information without pausing once for breath.

"I mean, Grandpa, he hasn't really gone and done it, because he naturally won't do anything without *her* and *she* says she won't do a thing until you have given your consent and told them that it's all right, so that's why Harry wanted to speak to you to-night — and you mustn't breathe a word about my telling you — you see he wants to do that entirely himself; but I thought I'd better break it to you gently."

Susan paused for breath and then, still gasping, she added as quickly as she could:

"Don't you think I was wise, Grandpa — to break it to you gently?"

The Bishop patted her hand tenderly and smiled anew.

"You haven't broken it at all, my dear. I haven't the remotest idea what you are talking about."

"Why, grandpa," exclaimed Susan in astonishment. "I've just told you — Harry's engaged to a girl named Lucille Anderson."

"Ah! I must be getting deaf. Dear me! I begin to see light on many things now. That is why you were suggesting that they should go to 'Years of Discretion.' Who is Lucille Anderson? Is she so very young in your opinion that she doesn't know her own mind?"

"Well, that's just it, you see. She *is* quite young — just about Harry's age, I should think. And then there's another thing, Grandpa. Lucille's an artist."

"You mean she paints?" asked the Bishop.

"No, she doesn't exactly paint," explained his granddaughter. "You know there are all sorts and kinds of artists, Grandpa; and Lucille's art is — er — a very beautiful art. It's the art of — er —"

"Well, my dear?" queried the Bishop.

"The art of — er — impersonation on the stage."

"An actress!" exclaimed the Bishop quickly, though not in a hostile tone. He seemed a little taken aback, that was all. It was Susan who appeared nervous. She kept clasping her hands together and blinking her eyes incessantly.

"Yes," she replied nervously. "She's an actress — but a very young one, Grandpa. And then," she continued in a more reassuring tone, "after all it makes very little difference nowadays. Heaps of nice girls have gone on the stage."

"An actress!" repeated the Bishop in a gentle, ruminating tone. "Strange how history —" he stopped abruptly and looked at Susan. "Did I understand you to say you liked her, my dear?"

"Oh, yes, Grandpa; immensely," Susan plunged into rhapsody without a qualm. Wouldn't Harry have done just as much for her under the same conditions? "Don't you remember, I told you only a few minutes ago. She's charming; perfectly lovely, and — and — her influence over Harry is really the finest thing I've ever seen. He really begins to think sensibly about serious things now. And it's all due to Lucille, every bit of it. And think, Grandpa! She has positively refused to consider herself engaged to him until you've given your consent. Once you see her I know you'll love her dearly. And then, remember," she went on coaxingly,

"even if she wasn't everything we wanted Harry's wife to be — which she is, mind you, for already I love her — still, even if she wasn't, Harry loves her and we've just got to stand by him, Grandpa, haven't we? Because, remember, dear, he's our own Harry, isn't he? And — well, you know as well as I do he's all we've got."

This impassioned plea was a little too much for Susan. She buried her head on her grandfather's shoulder and all of a sudden — and very much to her own disgust — she began to cry.

As for the Bishop, much to Susan's secret astonishment, he had never appeared more placid, more completely serene. It was this amazing attitude on the Bishop's part which caused Susan to get a grip on herself.

"That's just what I am remembering, dear," said the Bishop, drily. "Harry always did have very little sense."

Susan raised her head reproachfully from the handkerchief with which she had been surreptitiously mopping her eyes.

"Why, Grandpa! I don't see how you can say such a thing as that about Harry. I'm

amazed at you!" she went on reproachfully. " Didn't he play quarterback on the varsity? And didn't you say yourself that that took a whole lot of brains? "

" Did I? " smiled the Bishop, patting Susan affectionately on the shoulder. " Well, this proves that I was mistaken, doesn't it, my dear? "

" Well, even if you are! You're not going to desert *me* now and go back on Harry, are you? You simply couldn't do it, Grandpa. It isn't *in* you. "

The Bishop drew her to him ardently.

" Desert you! " he cried, and the tears stood in his eyes. " My little Susan, why, what in the name of common sense do you take me for? Listen, dear. Let me make a confession. I am not such an old fool as I look. Do you think I haven't been watching Master Harry? Do you imagine for a moment that I don't know all the symptoms? Don't you credit your old grandfather with just the least little bit of 'gumption,' my dear? I love that dear old New England word 'gumption,' " said the Bishop suddenly, changing his tone and speaking as though to him-

self. "It may be slang; I don't know, but at all events there's no other word in the English language which at this moment expresses just what I mean so well. Don't you think in spite of the fact that I'm a Bishop and have lived for seventy-two years that I still know just the least little bit about life? And do you think in spite of everything, even if Lucille Anderson should prove to be the original Witch of Endor, do you think that I could desert you now, you, my little cicerone, my wisdom cap who has led me by her gentle hands all through the years and pitfalls of this bewildering new century? Why, I'd be a renegade, Susan, a deserter, a Judas, something to be taken out and shot at dawn, if I left you now. No matter what Master Harry has done or intended to do, why, Susan, my dear, if it were necessary there would be only one thing left for me to do — perjure myself like a gentleman, as the late King Edward did, and look pleasant about it too. That particular branch of quixotry belongs to your grandmother's side of the family rather than mine, my dear. But I think on some strenuous occasion I might imitate it," continued

the Bishop, smiling volubly. "Because once, a very long time ago, your great grand-uncle Cornelius Van Tuyl set me a superb example. I heard it with my own ears and ever since, in spite of all our differences, I have always mentally coupled King Edward and Cornelius Van Tuyl together. They perjured themselves like gentlemen."

## VII

Susan was bewildered. Her grandfather, for all her much vaunted wisdom, might as well be talking Greek to her. She marveled at the change which had come over him — the fire which had come into his eyes, the enthusiasm and vigor which his manner and his gestures showed. Two decades at least in his excitement seemed to have fallen from him like a garment. For the first time in her short career Susan found herself completely nonplussed.

"And here's something else which I must say to you and which you won't understand!" exclaimed the Bishop. "They say that Shakespeare never repeats. Well, my child, in the Arm-

strong family there has never been a Shakespeare — worse luck! None of us except your grandmother, who was a Van Tuyl — has ever been accused of being literary. But if Shakespeare never repeats, history most certainly does, my dear. That's what I'm thanking God for at this moment, in a way which you, little Susan, can never know or realize. God has been good to your old grandfather!" cried the Bishop excitedly. "He has given me another chance. 'All that happens, happens again.' That's an old proverb which, for the first time, I know to-night to be true. There was another night long ago, Susan, when your father — my Harry — came to me as your Harry is coming now. Only his story was in a measure different. He had not waited to ask my consent. He had taken his love affairs into his own hands. But the setting was practically the same. Here was I in this chair, his judge — cold, satirical, just for the moment omnipotent, and the poor lad sat there, full of his love for his young wife, loyal to her, passionate, imperious, hating me for misjudging her and yet longing with every fiber of his brave young soul

that I would hold my hand out and befriend them both. But I didn't do it, Susan. God help me, I didn't do it. And he passed out of that door and it was the end — the end of everything between us, as you know. And now to-night, thirty and more years later, here's history repeating itself. Here's the good Lord giving me a chance to redeem myself. So don't fear for your Harry to-night, little Susan. He's your brother; and more than that, he's your father's son. I, his grandfather, lie under a double obligation. Trust me, dear." And the Bishop held out his hand to Susan, as though he were confirming some compact with a man of his own age. "Whether he's right or wrong I shall deal very gently with Harry. But I shall be politic, too. If without sternness I can save him, Susan, I shall do it. But if I discover that it's a love match, not even you, dear little girl, will prevent me from indorsing it and giving them my blessing. But if I think that I can still persuade Harry from doing a foolish thing, then trust to me, dear, I shall play a trump card — the only one I have. For his sake — and for yours, too, I shall tell him a story

which has been locked in my breast for forty-four years — a story which I never expected to tell to any living man."

Somewhere out in the corridor a door slammed violently. It was Harry returning home. Both Susan and the Bishop knew that this was often a manner of his when perturbed or excited — to slam the door.

"There's Harry now!" exclaimed Susan, feverishly.

"Run along, dear," said the Bishop, serenely. "And don't worry, child. Come back in half an hour to see the New Year in, and in the meantime remember your old grandfather's not going to let history repeat itself."

"Here I am, sir!" exclaimed Harry, entering breezily, and Susan, as she threw one furtive glance at them from the doorway cried as she left them hurriedly:

"Now, remember, dears. It's New Year's Eve — there's peace on earth and all that sort of thing. Don't fight. Grandpa won't, I know, but I'm awfully afraid of you, Harry."

"Well, Harry, so here you are at last!" ex-

claimed the Bishop genially as the door closed behind Susan. "We'd almost given you up, Susan and I. What detained you? Couldn't you get your theater tickets?"

"No, sir; not a seat to be had in town. It's an outrage, the way these speculators hold you up on all the holidays," said Harry, rather nervously. "So I paid a call instead. I went to see Lucille, sir. I'm sorry if I kept you waiting."

"Not at all, my dear boy," said the Bishop, good-naturedly. "It's a pretty old custom, New Year's calls, even if one pays them as you have, a few hours ahead of time; but I fear it's gone out, like the good old fashion of sending Christmas cards. I'm glad to think that you're preserving the traditions, Harry."

Then changing his tone somewhat abruptly, the Bishop said:

"What about our little chat, Harry?"

Harry was nervous — palpably nervous.

"You're quite sure your rheumatism isn't bothering you too much to-night? To-morrow would do as well, Grandpa, if you're not feeling quite up to the handle, you know."

"Not a bit of it!" exclaimed the Bishop. "I'm feeling as fit as a fiddle, my boy — never felt better in my life. Your sister Susan has played all my aches away with Harry Lauder. So put another log on the fire and go ahead."

"All right, sir," said Harry, as he placed the log on the burning coals, and then turned abruptly to his grandfather. "Grandpa," he said, with both hands thrust desperately into the pockets of his dinner coat, "I have something I want to —"

The Bishop interrupted him gently.

"Just a moment, Harry," he said. "If you go to my desk and open the second drawer from the top on the left hand side I think you'll find a box of cigars."

The boy rose from his chair and crossed the room to his grandfather's desk and drew out the box.

"Thank you, Harry; won't you have one? I know they're not as good as yours," smiled the Bishop deprecatingly. "But then, remember, I'm not a prospective millionaire like you. I can't afford the *very* best brands."

"Thank you, Grandfather, but I don't feel like smoking just now. You see, this matter's too important. I've come to you, sir, in order to —"

"Er — pardon me, Harry," interrupted the Bishop gently. "Just one moment! I haven't a match."

"Oh, lord! Excuse me, sir," exclaimed Harry, digging into his trousers pocket for his match safe. "There, now! Is that all right, sir?" as he lighted his grandfather's cigar. "Now, I want to tell you what's on my mind, sir. It's been there for some time and — I — I —"

"Yes?" said the Bishop in a kindly, questioning tone.

Harry's embarrassment was increasing every moment.

"I think I ought to — to get it off, sir. It's been bothering me for some time. And I think it's only fair to you, Grandfather, before I do anything definite, that I should make a clean breast of it to you."

"Well," said the Bishop encouragingly. "That sounds fair, Harry."

"You see — it's this way," began the boy. But suddenly he seemed at a loss for words.

"What way?" said the Bishop mildly.

"Hang it! Grandpa, I don't know just how to put the thing to you, but — but — but —"

Harry looked up suddenly and caught the Bishop smiling.

"Well, I'll be — darned! You're on! I believe you've been on all the time."

"You're a mind reader, Harry," chuckled the Bishop. "Your intuition is overwhelming; but on the other hand it's quite correct. As you say, my dear boy — I'm on."

Harry cast a wrathful look toward the door — a glance which was obviously intended to wreak vengeance on the absent Susan.

"I might have known!" he exclaimed surlily; "no girl could keep a secret!"

"Ah! But it was all my fault, Harry," interrupted the Bishop hastily. "Poor Susan was adamant — absolutely adamant! I wrung it out of her. I twisted her arms; I — I even kicked her shins. Really, you mustn't blame Susan, Harry. It was all my fault."

Harry's face expressed his profound disgust.

"Yes! And now you're making fun of me!  
Well—"

He straightened himself up and glared at his grandfather defiantly.

The Bishop suddenly grew very tender. He stretched his hand out and touched the boy affectionately on the arm.

"No, I'm not making fun of you, Harry—not a bit, my boy. I think it's fine of you to come to me this way, outspoken and above board. You're making me think of another night in this very room, when your dear father, my Harry, came to me with a story, perhaps a good deal like yours. And I was a brute to him, my boy. I have never forgiven myself. I—"

"But wait, sir. Just let me speak for myself now," the boy blurted out. "I'm on the level, and so is Lucille, and all I want now is to be perfectly frank with you. I wanted to tell you myself about Lucille. Susan had no business to tip you off, sir. That's a peculiar thing about me. I don't like anybody to butt in on my private affairs."

"Of course I know how you feel, my dear boy, but please don't blame Susan. I was the culprit. My insatiable curiosity dragged the truth from her. But tell me about Lucille now, Harry. You must love her a great deal."

"Well, of course I do," said Harry, a little sulkily.

"And she's very pretty, isn't she?" pursued the Bishop.

Harry's face brightened.

"Did Susan tell you that?" he asked eagerly.

"No"—and the Bishop shook his head vigorously. "I just guessed it—that's all."

"And she's awfully clever, too!" exclaimed the boy enthusiastically. "She can act like a streak. Why, Grandpa, Franklin Sargent told me himself that he hadn't had a cleverer pupil since Helen Ware was graduated there. And then she's got such bunches of character! She's just full of principle! Why, when it comes down to cases, sir, she's a million times too good for me!"

The Bishop leaned forward and patted the lad's hand once more.

"Of course she is—of course—of course!" said the old man corroboratively.

"I met her at the Randalls—you know Randall, that painter fellow. And now she's all alone in a rotten boarding house on Tenth Street and she has no work, because I simply wouldn't allow her to go on as a 'flapper' at the Winter Garden. And her family are all dead, and if she doesn't finish her course at the school of acting her artistic career will be ruined—so I really think I ought to marry her right off. Don't you think so? Don't you agree with me?"

The boy paused and looked anxiously at his grandfather.

"Well, now, *don't* you?"

"Just a moment, Harry," said the Bishop curiously. "Let me interrupt you for one second. What is a—flapper?"

"Oh, a flapper!" exclaimed Harry, irritated at the interruption. "A flapper—let me see." He cudgeled his brains for a moment. "Why, a flapper is a London Gaiety Theater term for what we call a 'broiler' or a 'pony'—you know, a

pretty girl, very young, who can dance a bit."

"Ah! I understand," said the Bishop.

"Of course, she never intended to do anything like that for a moment — even if I hadn't come in and put my foot down!" exclaimed Harry. "But don't you think I'm doing right, Grandpa, in marrying her right away?"

The Bishop roused himself with a slight effort and leaned forward in his chair.

"I'm not quite sure, Harry. You see, you're so young — both of you. You're just beginning life, and you may change and grow, my dear boy — she, as well as yourself. As for you, Harry, there may come a time when you'll need more than any little actress can give you —"

Harry made a slight movement of impatience.

"Oh, it's all right now," pursued the Bishop, "because you love her — I know that! But are you quite sure, Harry, that you'll always love her just the way you love her now? Are you certain that nothing hidden in the future — or in the past — can ever shake your faith in her and beat you down and break your heart?"

"I don't know what you mean, sir," exclaimed Harry.

"You must be very, very sure, my boy," continued the Bishop gravely, "or else you're not fair to yourself — and what's worse — I'm afraid you're not fair to her."

"Oh, what's the good of talking?" the boy burst out impatiently. "I just knew it would be this way! There's absolutely no use trying to do things with my family — they're all alike, narrow, conventional, dry as dust!"

He turned away from his grandfather suddenly and walked angrily across the room.

"If only dad and mother were alive, they'd understand!"

The Bishop winced.

"Don't say that, Harry. You know I've done my best for Susan and for you."

"Oh, I didn't mean that, Grandpa," said the boy penitently. "But you see it's an awfully long time now since you were young, and I think it's sort of hard for you to remember back — and sympathize with a fellow. Oh, I know you're awfully wise," he went on quickly. "And you can see

clear through people and understand them that way, and you're a great student of human nature and all that, but this is different. I — I — don't believe you ever felt the way I'm feeling now — and — oh, well! What's the use of talking about it. Thanks for trying, Grandpa — I won't keep you up any longer!"

The boy started toward the door.

"Where are you going, Harry?" cried the Bishop.

"I'm going to get married!" exclaimed Harry defiantly.

"To-night?"

"Yes! To-night — or to-morrow. I got the license this afternoon."

"Come here, Harry," said the Bishop, almost sternly, "and please shut the door."

Harry obeyed without a word and resumed his seat beside his grandfather.

By this time the Bishop, much to Harry's surprise, was chuckling softly to himself.

"What's the joke, Grandpa? I don't see any!" exclaimed the boy querulously. "I never felt more serious in my life."

“Pardon me, Harry. I wasn’t ridiculing you. Far from it,” said the Bishop. “I was merely thinking of an old friend of mine — by the way *he* was a bishop, too — he died only a few years ago, full of good works; a noble man through all his life, he had given all his powers and service to his church and people. But he was scarcely what one would have termed a wit, and yet, curiously enough, in spite of all his good works, his philanthropies and his achievements, he will be known in history on the strength of his one *bon mot*. A young relative of his — a nephew, if I remember right, married an actress. Everyone expected the Bishop to storm and rage, but like a wise man he did nothing of the sort. He was a philosopher, Harry. He merely smiled and shrugged his shoulders and said, ‘Actresses will happen in the best regulated families.’ It’s only now,” smiled the Bishop, “when I find myself in a similar predicament, that I realize how very wise that saying of my old friend was.”

“Well, I don’t see what that’s got to do with my case,” cried Harry, more indignant than ever as he started toward the door again. “If you’re

trying to make a joke of Lucille and me—”

“Hush, Harry,” said the Bishop, decisively. “Don’t be foolish, lad; come and sit down here. No, not in that chair, where I have to turn my head to look at you, but here in front of me, on the footstool, where the fire lights up both our faces; there where your dear father sat the last time that I ever saw him.”

“But what more is there to be said, sir?” expostulated Harry, as he took his seat upon the footstool. “You’ve expressed your opinion; you’ve relieved your mind. You’re against us.”

“No, I’m not, Harry—don’t say that! Be fair,” said the Bishop. “You said just now I couldn’t look back and remember how I felt when I was young. Well, I do remember, Harry; believe me, I do! Because no matter how old one grows there is always something which keeps a little youth still burning in one’s heart.”

“I beg your pardon, sir,” said Harry, contritely. “I just lost my temper for a moment. I didn’t mean to hurt you, Grandpa.”

“You didn’t, my dear boy,” smiled the Bishop. “But you’ve made me think of something that I

had almost persuaded myself I had quite forgotten. It all happened so long ago, Harry, and yet, strangely enough, all to-day for the first time in many years the whole episode has been constantly in my mind. Perhaps the dying of the old year has made me sentimental; I don't know, perhaps that's it. At all events, it's something I have never told to anyone — I used to think I never would, Harry. In fact, I made a vow to that effect as I remember, but, as — well! times change. I didn't realize then I was to have a grandson like you, Harry, of whom I might make a confidant. I wonder if you've got time to wait and hear about it?"

Harry peered at his grandfather rather distrustfully.

"I should be very glad to hear your story, sir," he said grimly. "But if you think there's anything in it that's going to change my mind about marrying Lucille you might as well stop right here."

The Bishop rose with difficulty from his chair and limped slowly across the room towards his desk. Harry sprang to his feet.

“What is it, Grandpa? Can’t I get it for you?”

A twinge in his back made the Bishop pause midway across the room and give vent to a poignant “Ouch!”

“Your rheumatism bad to-night, sir?” said Harry sympathetically.

In spite of the pain the Bishop turned and smiled benignly on his grandson.

“Don’t mention rheumatism now, my boy!”

He had reached the desk and was fumbling in his pocket for his bunch of keys. As he spoke again he half closed his eyes.

“Remember, I’m only twenty-eight years old, Harry; only twenty-eight years old!”

He opened the lower drawer and, after groping among its contents, he drew forth a small mahogany box.

“Do you know what’s in this little box, Harry?” said the Bishop, fondling the box reverently as he held it in his hand.

“No, sir; what is it?” said Harry. “The family jewels?”

“No,” said the Bishop, with a radiant smile.

“ It’s more precious than jewels, Harry; and rarer, too! It’s romance, my boy — the perfume of romance! ”

“ How do you mean, sir? I don’t quite follow you,” said Harry.

“ Look! ” said the Bishop.

He opened the box and took out tenderly a little wisp of yellow lace.

“ Why, it’s a handkerchief! ” said Harry, awed.

“ Yes,” nodded the Bishop, speaking as though half to himself. “ A little handkerchief! That’s all.”

He opened it and from its folds there dropped a few crisp and withered flowers.

“ White violets! ” he exclaimed as he held them in his hand and sniffed at them, then sighed and shook his head, and dropped them back into the box. “ They’re dry and yellow now — their sweetness is all gone — I’m an old man, Harry — but somehow — why, it seems only like yesterday.”

“ What does, sir? ” said the boy, wonderingly.

The Bishop turned out the desk lamp and holding the box very tenderly in his hands crossed to his seat before the fire.

“ Ah! That’s what I’m going to tell you now. Sit down, Harry. Are you comfortable there? That’s right. Well, it was over forty years ago — forty-five would be nearer the mark. How the time does fly! — and I was the young Rector of St. Giles, you know; that was before I married your grandmother — God bless her! Although I had known her nearly all my life. Well, Harry, one night — in November, it was, I went to an evening party at old Cornelius Van Tuyl’s and there in the kaleidoscope of music and beauty and fashion, the great adventure of my life began.”

# “THE TROOPS OF MIDIAN”

## CHAPTER I

MR. CORNELIUS VAN TUYL INCREASES THE NUMBER OF HIS GUESTS BY ONE

*My thoughts at the end of the long, long day  
Fly over the years and far away.*

—“*The Troops of Midian*,” by Edward Sheldon.

LIGHTS blazed from all the windows of the old Van Tuyl mansion. Fifth Avenue, all the way from Washington Square to Fourteenth Street, seemed to be fully aware that some event quite out of the ordinary was in the air. That Cornelius Van Tuyl was about to give one of his famous musical soirees was a self-evident fact; for there, down the long stoop of the old mansion, was the wide strip of red velvet carpet and the famous red and white striped canopy which all Fifth Avenue living south of the Hotel Albemarle had long since learned to know. Whenever that famous canopy and its attendant carpet made its appear-

ance the denizens of all the fashionable and unfashionable boarding houses of the town the next morning devoured the fashion notes of their newspaper with an avidity which they never displayed for their matutinal stewed prunes. For even the Charity Ball itself never elicited more elaborate and minute descriptions from the newspapers than any festivity which took place at Cornelius Van Tuyl's. It was not because he was a man of fashion or because of his great wealth, his splendid charities or his sybaritic inclinations that these entertainments of his always received such wide publicity. The man was a personality, that was all. "Cornelius Van Tuyl is unique. He never does anything like anyone else," used to be said of him in every quarter.

But to-night, as many theatergoers from Wallack's, where "The Lancashire Lass" was playing, wended their way homeward across Fifth Avenue, it was not of "Corny" Van Tuyl, the town's political idol, they paused to speak as they caught sight of the gay canopy. The name on every lip that night was Margherita Cavallini — Cavallini, the young Italian opera singer, who six weeks be-

fore, fresh from her European triumphs, had swept into the Academy of Music in "Mignon" and captured all the town.

To the newspapers, which had vied with each other in heralding her triumph; to the musical critics, who, for want of more appropriate phrases had hailed her as "The Golden Nightingale" or the "Grand Opera Lotta," and to those other enthusiasts who, from their seats in the boxes and the orchestra had bombarded her every appearance with fusillades of flowers, La Cavallini had persistently turned the colder of her two beautiful shoulders. Madame Cavallini had refused to be interviewed; Madame Cavallini declined positively to talk for publication; she refused to allow her pictures to be placed on sale. Her rooms at the Brevoort House were guarded by a special page boy night and day, and throughout the six weeks of her New York engagement no one outside of her manager, her fellow artists at the theater and her private waiter at the hotel had had an opportunity to wish her even so much as a civil "good morning."

And for all this the public whom she flouted so

persistently adored her all the more. Could any artist, short of our own modern Mary Garden, have thought out and achieved so stupendous an advertisement? And to-night La Cavallini was to be Corny Van Tuyl's guest of honor. Furthermore, of her own accord she had volunteered to sing for his guests.

Was it any wonder, then, that the man in the street wagged his head with a knowing look and winked his eye at his wife? The clubs and the cafés, the drawing-rooms and green rooms were busy with the names of La Cavallini and Cornelius Van Tuyl. So while the gossips chattered and surmised in all parts of the town and the invited guests were giving the last touches to their toilets, inside the house, standing serenely at the foot of the broad staircase — now casting a last glance at the decorations in the long drawing-rooms and throwing a housewife's experienced look into the oak dining-room where already the Delmonico waiters were making their preliminary preparations for the supper, stood a sweet-faced woman with very straight, fair hair. She wore it in a very simple fashion; quite out of accordance with the

mode of the day. By her looks she might have been seven and twenty — according to the record in the Van Tuyl family Bible she was thirty-one. But Susan Van Tuyl was by nature such a sunny and light-hearted person that she never allowed even such portentous matters as her age or her looks to bother her peace of mind. At the moment Susan was feeling singularly pleased both with herself and the world at large. For never since the day when, as a little girl, she first came to live in her uncle's house, could she remember a time when the dear old rooms had looked so beautiful. Flowers and smilax were everywhere. The decorations had all been Susan's special care, and looking at them she saw that they were exceeding good.

So, barring the fact that her hair had positively refused to stay in curl, Susan was congratulating herself that she hadn't a care in the world, when a cheery baritone voice from the head of the staircase called to her.

“Hello! my little chatelaine, where are you? Let's hold a council of war.”

The man who came toward her was tall and

slender and somewhere about fifty years of age. His hair, which he wore a trifle long, was beginning to be tinged with gray and his face looked rather pale and care-worn, but as he smiled down affectionately at Susan there was a boyish twinkle in his eyes, which seemed to lift for the moment at least twenty years from his age. He was a graceful man and so picturesque in his appearance that he might just have stepped out of some old portrait. In his hand he carried a long strip of paper, covered with names.

"I've just been counting noses, Susan," said Van Tuyl gaily. "Dividing the sheep from the goats, as it were, and wondering to just what particular extent they're all going to disagree. It ought to be lots of fun, Susan! There will be ninety and nine of us all told. Sounds quite like the hymn, doesn't it? But I never can quite remember whether the plurality consisted of 'just persons' or 'lost sheep.' "

"Never mind about lost sheep just now, Uncle," laughed Susan. "Tell me about your lions. How many of them are going to roar for you to-

night? And what particular dainties shall I feed them? ”

“ Let me see now ”— and Cornelius Van Tuyl scratched his head meditatively — “ there ’ll be Ole Bull, the violinist; but then he ’s no bother; the old dowagers will keep him amused. It ’s always a puzzle to me, Susan, why the oldest and most respectable ladies invariably dote on the most passionate type of musician. Then, let me see, Mrs. Scott Siddons is coming. She ’s a trifle heavy, but extremely decorative. Be sure and ask her, my dear, when she ’s going to play ‘ Medea.’ I have an idea that she wasn ’t completely overjoyed at Mrs. Bower ’s great success in that rôle. Oh! and then let me see. Matilda Heron ’s coming, but then she, dear soul, is always a host in herself. Oh, and by the way, Susan, before I forget it, I bought a box for the matinee at ‘ Camille,’ in which her protégée, that pretty little red-haired girl, Agnes Ethel, is to appear. Imagine anybody but Matilda Heron ever presuming to attempt Camille. ”

“ Why, Uncle, was she so wonderful? ”

“ Wonderful! That ’s not the word; she was

terrific. It must be twelve or thirteen years since I saw her play it first and she remains the first and only American actress who, to my way of thinking, ever played an emotional rôle like a human being."

"Why, you surprise me, Uncle, after what Mr. William Winter said about her 'Camille' in the *Tribune* this morning."

"Good heavens!" laughed Van Tuyl, "and he's coming here to-night, too. *That* will be fun! Where's the paper? Let me see what he said."

Susan delved into the depths of the butler's pantry and emerged in a moment with that morning's *Tribune* in her hand.

"Just listen to this, Uncle," and she read.

"Miss Agnes Ethel, a pupil of Matilda Heron, is to make a private *début* — good care being taken to make it as public as possible of course — at Jerome's Theater on the 10th inst. — next Saturday. Miss Agnes Ethel will play 'Camille.' It is a pity, we think, that Miss Heron has not educated her pupil in a better school than her own. Miss Heron ought to be aware that the day of 'Camile' is entirely passed. French merriment

is now at the top of the tree, but pulmonary disease and French vice can charm no longer. They constituted a sufficiently nasty mixture in the first place and they have not improved in the last decade. The supposition that anybody wants to see a new actress in 'Camille' in this year of our Lord 1868, is the wildest of all delusions — especially when it is considered that the new actress, as a pupil of Miss Heron's must have acquired all the grave defects of the style of that actress. Faults, as everybody knows, are much more salient and much more easily copied than merits. If Miss Agnes Ethel proposes to follow the stage as a profession she would be wise to learn her business by a proper apprenticeship and not to wreck her hopes at the outset on the barren rocks of a worn-out theatrical sensation. Miss Heron herself, in 'Camille,' is as much as the public can endure of that sort of thing, and we believe that Miss Heron is shortly to play 'Camille' once more on the off nights of Mr. Edwin Forrest's engagement at Niblo's."

Van Tuyl dropped the newspaper and throwing back his head laughed heartily.

"Well, that is rather a hot shot to fire at poor Matilda, considering that she has been playing 'Camille' now for thirteen years. But she'll be equal to him. Watch! They'll probably end the evening in a love feast. Let's put them next to each other at supper, Susan."

"Winter ought to be here in a minute or two now," continued Van Tuyl, as he looked at his watch. "He's reviewing the Barney Williamses to-night in 'The Family Circle.' But it's a revival, so it won't take him long. He said he'd write his 'stuff' at the Albemarle and bring it along with him and have his young assistant, Dan, call for it here. Bright lad, that boy Dan!" continued Van Tuyl. "He can't be more than fifteen, and yet, as I said to Winter the other day, he knows more about the theatrical business than all of us put together. However, back to our muttons, Susan! I don't think you'll have to worry about anybody in particular to-night, except, of course, Madame Cavallini. I should like you to make a good deal of her. This is the first time I've been able to induce her to come out of her shell. In spite of her great triumph here I think she's extremely home-

sick. With her old companion, Vannucci, and that infernal little monkey of hers, which loathes my very soul, she sits in her rooms at the Brevoort and mopes and mopes. Let's try and cheer her up, Susan! It will be an act of charity. Oh! And by the way, I forgot to tell you, we are to have an extra guest, who will make us an even hundred. Tom Armstrong's coming."

"Tom!" echoed Susan in amazement. "Tom Armstrong coming to one of your parties! Why, what's come over the boy?"

"Oh, nothing incurable," said Van Tuyl, looking at Susan rather significantly. "I have a suspicion, though, he's very much in love. In fact, he started to tell me so when I met him in front of St. Giles's this morning. He said he wanted to talk to me on a very important matter; but just at that moment that old busybody, Mrs. Rutherford, came along and we hadn't a chance for another word. I told Tom to drop in here to-night if only for a half an hour and then we could finish our chat up in the library. So, Susan, you must look your very bonniest to-night, just to do honor to his occasion."

"What have I to do with the matter?" asked Susan, looking quite innocent.

"Tut! Tut! My dear. Don't you suppose I've got eyes in the back of my head? Tom's a fine fellow, even if he is a bit ponderous and has difficulty in seeing a joke. But you'll educate him, Susan. I've no doubt you'll make a splendid fellow out of our young rector of St. Giles's. It's high time, too, Susan. I've stood in your way long enough. How can I ever recompense you for these dear sweet teens and twenties, all of which you sacrificed for me? So to-night when Tom comes to you, Susan, treat him kindly."

"You're all wrong, Uncle," cried Susan, laughing, "I'm afraid you're away off the track! Meantime if Mr. Winter's really coming I think I'd better run upstairs and hide my copy of 'Tricotrin'—you know what he thinks of 'Ouida'—'pestiferous and trashy' was what he said of 'Under Two Flags' when Lotta played in it last year. And 'Tricotrin' is such a dear story. They told me at the library to-day that it's even more popular than Mrs. E. D. E. N. Southworth's 'The Hidden Hand.' "

"There's one thing about old lady Southworth's novels," laughed Van Tuyl. "They always make you so hungry. They're so full of banquets and dinners and 'high teas' that I always feel famished long before I reach 'to be continued in our next.' Before you go let me think if there's anything else"—as Susan was about to run upstairs. "Ah, yes! Young Daly will be here to-night—the chap who wrote 'Under the Gaslight.' He let me read a new play of his the other night and I think it's uncommonly clever. It's called 'Horizon,' and there's a little Western girl in it called 'Med' which pretty Agnes Ethel could, I think, play to perfection. Bring them together if the chance arises. I should like to do her a good turn for Matilda's sake. Ah! General Sickles, how d'y do?" and Van Tuyl turned to greet one of several guests who were entering. "Splendid weather, isn't it?"

Directly behind General Sickles, a young boy entered in street clothes, carrying his cap in his hand.

"Ah! Dan, how are you, my boy?" cried Van Tuyl, shaking the youngster by the hand.

“ You’ve come for Mr. Winter’s copy, haven’t you? Well, he hasn’t arrived yet. Come along with me, my lad. Let’s go foraging in the butler’s pantry. I’m as hungry as a hunter myself — so busy I didn’t eat a scrap of dinner. That’s the worst of giving suppers to other people, you always forget to eat anything yourself. This time I shall take precautions. What shall we eat, Dan? Shall it be chicken sandwiches or lobster salad?”

As he spoke, Van Tuyl, just to make the youngster feel perfectly at home, began eating sandwiches voraciously.

“ What will you drink, my boy? ” exclaimed Van Tuyl, after he had piled the lad’s plate high with salad.

“ A glass of champagne, eh? ”

“ No, thanks, sir, ” said Dan. “ I never drink.”

“ Quite right, my lad, quite right. I ought to be ashamed of myself for putting temptation in your way. But tell me the news, Dan. You’re my chief authority, you know. I was telling Mr. Winter only yesterday that you’re so invaluable to him the *Tribune* ought to raise your salary.”

“ Have you seen the new beauty in ‘Ixion,’

sir?" said Dan, forgetting that his mouth was half full in his enthusiasm.

"Which one, Dan — Lydia Thompson or Pauline Markham?"

"Oh, neither of them, sir; she's not a principal — she's just one of the extras with only a few lines to speak," cried the lad, his whole face lighting up with enthusiasm. "But it's the way she says them! Her voice is like a great organ in church. There's a girl who is going to be a great actress, sir. If I was Mr. Lester Wallack I'd put her under contract and make her my leading woman right away."

"Well, why don't you speak to Mr. Winter about her. He knows Mr. Wallack very well."

"Ah! But that's just it, sir. Mr. Winter and I never do agree about actresses. He believes in the old school of acting; I'm a realist."

"Ah! So that's the way of it," smiled Van Tuyl.

"I say, Mr. Van Tuyl," said the boy bashfully. "Did you happen to read that article in the *Herald* yesterday on 'Realism on Our Stage'? I'd like you to read it, sir. Here it is"— and Dan

pulled a much becrumpled clipping out of his vest pocket. "I wrote that after hours and a chum of mine on the *Herald* put it in for me. You see, down in our office they keep me writing the 'Among the attractions next week will be,' and sometimes for a treat they let me write obituary notices; so you see I don't get much chance to improve my style. Would you mind reading it, Mr. Van Tuyl?" asked the boy eagerly.

"With the greatest pleasure," said his host; and his eyes scanned rapidly these lines from the New York *Herald* of Nov. 22, 1868.

"Steam is now the most effective agency employed upon the American stage. With the smoking railroad at Niblo's and the screeching steam-boat at Wallack's it must be acknowledged that steam now draws audiences as well as cars and barges. The railroad scene at Niblo's could be improved upon but the steamboat scene as done at Wallack's is the most perfect thing of the kind ever attempted on the stage in this country. A large boat with genuine steam and real smoke, making her landing at a good imitation of a pier when she lands live and kicking passengers, and

then blowing her genuine whistle of steam as her lines are cast off from the spiles, and her smooth transit across the stage through the canvas water is something so novel in itself that it never fails to bring down the house."

"Why, that's capital, Dan," exclaimed Van Tuyl with enthusiasm. "It's worthy of Mr. Winter himself. But tell me now about this new goddess of yours. I'm expecting Mr. Wallack here to-night. I might be able to do a good turn for your divinity. What's her name, Dan?"

"Rose Coghlan, sir," said Dan.

"A pretty name, Dan; I'll remember it," said Van Tuyl, "and if Mr. Wallack ever should make her famous I'll see that you get your share of credit for the deed."

"Thank you, sir," said the boy gratefully. "And I say, Mr. Van Tuyl, if the chance comes up I'd be very much obliged to you if you would say something to Mr. Winter about raising my salary. You see, it's not only on my account I'm speaking, but I've got a little brother Charlie; he's a good deal younger than me, but he's mighty ambitious. He's just eating his head off waiting

for me to get promoted so that he can step into my shoes."

"Trust me, Dan, I won't forget," and Van Tuyl patted the lad kindly upon the shoulder. "By the way, Dan," he added, "there's one other thing I want to know; what's your last name? In all the months we've been acquainted I've known you merely as 'Dan.' "

"Frohman, sir," replied the boy, "that's my name — Daniel Frohman."

"Mr. Lester Wallack! Mr. William Winter! Mr. Augustin Daly!" announced the butler.

Three men chatting volubly entered the house together.

Van Tuyl advanced to meet them.

"How are you, Wallack, old man?" shaking hands with a tall, striking-looking man, wearing a monocle and a drooping, obviously dyed mustache. "I've a great piece of news for you. We'll talk about it later on. Winter, my dear fellow!" he exclaimed affectionately, as he shook hands with the distinguished dramatic critic. "I've just been telling that office boy of yours that the *Tribune* ought to raise his salary." Then,

turning to an extremely handsome but rather stern-looking man, he said, holding his hand out, " My dear Daly, I'm delighted to welcome you here to-night. You've come just in the nick of time." He drew him slightly to one side and continued more confidentially. " You remember that play of yours we read together, ' Horizon ' ? Well, I've discovered your heroine for you. She'll be here to-night. One glance at her will convince you that she'll make an ideal ' Med. ' "

While the three other men continued chatting Mr. Winter stepped into the hall and handed a large envelope containing his review to young Frohman.

" Hurry up, Daniel! " said the dramatic critic, looking at his watch. " I'm afraid we're a little bit late for the first edition."

The lad started off on a run.

Strange meetings with many strangers, consequences took place in the old Van Tuyl house that night—meetings which were fraught with fame and with fortune and celebrity for more than one woman and one man. But of all the unknowns who started on the road to success that evening

no two were destined to bear a longer and more illustrious part in the theatrical history of the town than the lad who carried "copy" to the newspaper office and his "little brother Charlie."

Guests were arriving in droves. But still there was no sign of La Cavallini. That she would be late was to be expected, for she had been singing her most popular opera, "Mignon," at the Academy that night. In order that she should avoid the crush Van Tuyl had thoughtfully arranged with her coachman to drive to a small door on one of the side streets — an entrance generally used only by Van Tuyl himself and the members of the family. As he awaited her arrival a ring came at the door. Van Tuyl answered it himself. On the threshold stood a tall young man of seven or eight and twenty, wearing the cloth of an Episcopal clergyman, over which hung a long, rather shabby-appearing black cloak. He was exceedingly good looking, and as he hastily removed his hat he revealed a mop of curly light brown hair.

"Good boy, Tom!" exclaimed Van Tuyl, clapping heartily on the shoulder the Rev. Thomas Armstrong of St. Giles's. "Run along upstairs

by the private staircase if you want to escape the mob. You'll find Susan on duty up there somewhere. I'll join you in a few minutes."

"Sorry I'm late, sir; but I was detained down at the Bowery Mission. I hadn't even time to go home and dress," said the young clergyman.

"Don't apologize, Tom. Your cloth carries you anywhere, my dear boy. Run along now."

The young man bounded up the stairs. At the top he paused abruptly at the sound of his own name. In the room he was about to enter stood Susan Van Tuyl, surrounded by half a dozen elderly men and women, most of them members of his own congregation, as Tom speedily recognized with a single glance of his eye.

"You can say what you please, Miss Van Tuyl," exclaimed a stout, elderly woman dressed in stiff black silk. "I disagree with you entirely. Mr. Armstrong's nose is *not* Grecian by any manner of means."

"Dear Mrs. Frothingham," said Susan politely, "are noses then your only standard of a man of God?"

"Ah, well, I agree with Mrs. Frothingham,"

chimed in another stout dowager, Mrs. Rutherford. "There's something about the young man I never liked. He's too officious, too dictatorial, and then his grandfather on his mother's side came of very doubtful stock, you know — an Irish peasant, I believe, who only landed here some time about 1805."

Susan raised her eyebrows in astonishment.

"Surely, Mrs. Rutherford," she remarked blandly, "your memory doesn't take you quite as far back as all that?"

"And to think," cried De Puyster Putnam, plucking indignantly at his long "Dundrearies," "that we, the very oldest parishioners of St. Giles's, are condemned to listen to his impertinent sermons. Why, only last Sunday I woke up just in time to catch the young puppy making scurrilous allusions to *me!*!"

Stout Mrs. Frothingham stopped fanning herself and displayed a sudden interest.

"Dear me, Mr. De Puyster," she remarked, "I am exceedingly sorry my neuralgia kept me from attending church last Sunday. What did he say about you?"

“I’ll tell you what he said,” said Susan deliberately, taking the conversation into her own hands. “He said he didn’t doubt that several of our elderly beaux would soon be making heaven fashionable and organizing society among the more exclusive angels.”

“Abominable!” cried Mrs. Frothingham, fanning herself vigorously once more.

“I call it blasphemous!” said Mrs. Rutherford, in a tone which was intended to settle the matter once and for all.

“It was hardly the remark of a gentleman,” said De Puyster Putnam, still in an injured tone.

“But he’s not a gentleman. What can you expect?” retorted Mrs. Fothingham.

“I admit he dresses like a penwiper,” continued De Puyster Putnam.

“Yes, and he spends all his spare time with workingmen,” chimed in Mrs. Rutherford.

Mr. Putnam stroked his whiskers once more before turning his guns full upon Susan.

“My dear young lady,” he remarked in a patronizing tone, “why your excellent uncle ever

gave him the church is more than I shall ever be able to understand."

"Because Uncle knows he's the coming man, that's why!" cried Susan with flashing eyes. "Look what he's done here in these last two years! Hasn't he built up the congregation from nothing at all to the third largest in New York? Hasn't he started the athletic club for the young men and the cooking school for the girls? Hasn't he founded our parish school for poor children — and got people to donate a playground — and a circulating library — and a big hall for lectures and musical entertainments? Isn't he just as much at home and just as much loved down in a Bowery saloon as he is here in a Fifth Avenue drawing-room? Isn't he —"

But at this moment the Rev. Thomas Armstrong decided that he had heard enough about himself. There was a broad, good-natured smile upon his face as he advanced toward Susan, who was standing with her back to him. De Puyster Putnam was the first to catch sight of Tom. His tune changed instantly.

He stuttered, and his face flushed.

"I — er — I — er — quite agree with you, Miss Van Tuyl!" he remarked.

"His efforts are very praiseworthy, I'm sure," hastily exclaimed Mrs. Frothingham as she also saw Tom bearing down upon them.

"Quite remarkable, indeed!" gasped Mrs. Rutherford, equally anxious to save the situation.

Susan, astonished at their change of tone, turned around suddenly.

"But —" she began. Then, seeing Tom, she burst out laughing and held her hand out to him. "Ah! I see," she exclaimed. "You've arrived just in time, Tom. We've been talking about you."

"So I heard," said Tom, laughing again. "Thank you, Susan. You're a splendid champion."

"Oh, but my dear Mr. Armstrong," cried Mrs. Rutherford, rising hastily, "we were all saying the most *flattering* things —"

"Yes, indeed, my dear sir!" exclaimed Mrs. Frothingham nervously, as she, too, prepared to beat a dignified retreat. "I wonder your ears weren't *burning* —"

"By Jove, yes — so do I," laughed De Puyster Putnam nervously.

"Don't let me drive you away, ladies," said Tom gallantly.

"I must be looking after my Mabel," explained Mrs. Frothingham. "With all these extraordinary celebrities on the premises one never knows whom she might be introduced to. And dear Mabel is so impulsive! She might be asking some of them to tea!"

"And I was just on the point of offering Mrs. Rutherford some supper," added De Puyster Putnam. "One mustn't forget this is one of the few houses where Blue Seal Johannisberger flows like water. *Au revoir, Miss Van Tuyl*" — and he bowed profoundly — "Your servant!"

"Oh, but none of you must go before Madame Cavallini comes!" called Susan as all three started down the stairs. "She's promised to sing for us. And you know what that means! *Au revoir — au revoir —*"

As they vanished Susan turned with flashing eyes to Tom.

"Cats! All three of them!" she cried furiously.

ously. "Two tabbys and one old Tom! Did you hear what they were saying about you?"

"Oh, just a little," laughed Tom; "but what does it matter, my dear Susan? *They're* not the people that really *count!*"

"I know! That's all very well, but I just can't bear their criticising you!"

Susan turned to the Rev. Thomas Armstrong and looked him carefully over from head to foot with a critical but unbiased eye.

"Oh, Tom! You've got your oldest clothes on!" she exclaimed as though chiding some naughty child. "Why couldn't you have stopped to dress?"

"Well, I was going to, honestly I was, Susan!" exclaimed Tom. "But this is my night at the athletic club, and about ten o'clock, just as I had taken on the heavy work of the ward, little Jimmy Baxter came running in and said young Sullivan was drunk again and was killing his wife. So would I please step over for a minute."

"What's the matter, Susan? What are you looking at?"

Susan was still gazing at him fixedly. Invol-

untarily Tom's right hand strayed to his left shoulder as though to remove some possible bit of fluff.

"It's your hair, Tom — your hair!" exclaimed Susan.

"What's the matter with it — sticking up behind as usual?" And Tom passed his hand heavily over his curly crop.

"Just one lock — on the left," said Susan, coming close to him. "Bend over. I'll fix it for you."

Tom bent his head obediently and indulged in a sly smile.

"What an injustice it is that you should have all these lovely curls, which aren't a bit of use to you, while my poor locks won't keep in crimp for five minutes on end. There ought to be a law against it!" exclaimed Susan laughingly. "A law making it a criminal offense for any man to be born with curly hair."

"Oh, come, come, Mrs. Delilah!" exclaimed Tom, "don't be so hard on us poor Samsons. We wouldn't have a hair left on our heads if you had your way. Well, as I was saying, Susan," he con-

tinued, resuming his explanation, "I found young Sullivan in a fighting mood and rather difficult to manage. And then in the middle of it all—what do you think?—if Mrs. Sullivan didn't go and have another baby!"

"Good heavens! Poor dear! That makes the sixth, doesn't it?" remarked Susan, who by this time, handkerchief in hand, was trying to take out a spot from the lapel of Tom's coat. "I'll go around the first thing to-morrow morning and see how she's getting on."

"Oh, I say, Miss Van Tuyl!" called a man's voice from the stairway.

Susan leaned over the balustrade and smiled down upon a dandified-looking young man of thirty, who was coming up the stairs as fast as he could with a plate of lobster salad in one hand and a dish of macaroons in the other.

"Why, Mr. Livingstone! How kind of you! Is all this for me?" laughed Susan.

"Yes, indeed, Miss Van Tuyl. You owe that dab of mayonnaise to no less a person than the 'Golden Nightingale.' "

"Why, Mr. Livingstone?" asked Susan.

"Fact, I assure you. I never could have got a morsel if it hadn't been for her," continued Fred Livingstone, helping himself to a macaroon. "Why, all the literary and artistic talent in New York were fighting like a band of demons around the supper when — thank the Lord! the band struck up and someone cried that Cavallini had arrived! Two seconds and there wasn't a soul in the entire dining-room — excepting myself, of course. I'm always far more interested in my supper than in any *prima donna* that ever sang. It's my opinion they should be kept in their place, behind the footlights or in their own little gilded cages like our domestic canaries. But they certainly did make a fuss over her downstairs. Why, even the caterer's men were standing up on chairs to catch a glimpse of the 'divinity'!'"

"Oh, I really must go down and greet her!" exclaimed Susan, starting for the stairs.

"If you see your uncle, Susan," said Tom, "would you mind telling him where I am."

"Very well, Tom," smiled Susan. "Are you coming along, Mr. Livingstone?"

"Er — will you excuse me, Miss Van Tuyl?"

said Livingstone. "If you don't mind I'll stay here. I want to have a word or two with Tom."

"Why, certainly!" said Susan, as she vanished.

Livingstone's manner changed instantly.

"Well!" he exclaimed, fairly quivering with rage. "This is the last time I bring my wife to this house!"

"Why, what's the matter?" said Tom, amazed.

"Why the man must be out of his head," cried Livingstone.

"Who? What man!" exclaimed Tom, growing curious.

"Why, Van Tuyl, who else do you suppose I could mean?"

"What on earth's he done?"

"Good Lord, man! Don't you realize who's downstairs? Don't you know who's making a tour of the rooms on his arm? Don't you know whom he's introducing to every respectable woman that's been fool enough to come here to-night?"

"No, I don't," interrupted Tom. "Who is she?"

"Why La Cavallini!" said Livingstone impressively.

Tom looked puzzled.

"Oh, you mean that foreign opera singer? Well, what of it?"

"What of it!" cried Livingstone. "Don't be a fool, man; she's his mistress, that's all."

"What!" said Tom, controlling himself with difficulty.

"Oh, I wouldn't have mentioned it to you, his rector, if he hadn't brought her here to-night. I'm a man of the world; in fact, I'm exceedingly broad minded, I believe in letting a man's private affairs strictly alone. But, by gad, sir; I do expect him in return to show a little common decency."

"I see!" said Tom, grimly; and he clenched his hands.

"And look here, Tom," Livingstone went rattling on. "So long as you are his rector and all that, I think you ought to speak to him about it — haul him over the coals and haul him jolly hard!"

"And this is what you wanted to say to me?" asked Tom, still keeping a tight rein on himself.

"Yes."

Tom took a step toward Livingstone and looked him in the eye.

"And I have one or two things to say to you," he said decisively. "And I'll just begin by telling you what you are — you're a miserable gossiping old woman!"

"Wait — hold on!" cried Livingstone taken aback. "Who are you talking to?"

"I'm talking to you," continued Tom grimly. "A pitiful fool who hears a dirty story and can't rest until he's passed it on! Why, you apology for the male sex, do you know what you're doing? You're a guest in a gentleman's house — you've eaten his food and drenched yourself in his wine and shaken him by the hand and now you're turning around and circulating rotten lies behind his back —"

"They're not lies," interrupted Livingstone, more outraged than ever. "It's the truth I'm telling you, he's lived with her for years. She has a villa on the Riviera that Van Tuyl gave her. It's called Millefleurs. Jack Morris saw them there together —"

“Be still!” thundered Tom.

Livingstone, awed by the fury in Tom’s voice, retreated behind the sofa but continued to talk volubly from behind it.

“I won’t be still. Why, all the fellows know what Rita Cavallini is. Ask Guvvy Fisk; he knew the French musician chap that found her singing under hotel windows years ago in Venice. And Guvvy knows just when she kicked him out and went off with that Russian Grand Duke and lived with him in Petersburg until the Prince de Join Ville set her up in Paris! Why, she’s notorious all over Europe — her name’s a byword in every capital — she’s ruined whole families — run through fortune after fortune. It was outside her door that that young English poet shot himself — the Emperor borrowed money from the Rothschilds just to buy her diamonds — the King of Naples gave her —”

“Stop it, Livingstone!” cried Tom, breaking in.  
“Stop it, or I’ll break your neck!”

From his intrenchment behind the sofa Livingstone was now making warily for the head of the stairs.

"And as for Van Tuyl—well, everybody knows what he's been like—"

Tom made a bound toward him.

"You little cur, you—"

But the rest of Tom's phrase was never spoken. Just at that instant Van Tuyl's handsome head appeared above the balustrade.

"Well, my young friends!" said their host, serenely. "What's the matter? What's it all about?"

"Oh, nothing, Tom and I were having a little argument; that's all," said Livingstone politely, as he pulled his watch out and looked at it in order to cover his confusion. "Good gracious—twelve o'clock. You haven't seen my wife anywhere about, Mr. Van Tuyl?"

"But you're not going?" said Van Tuyl, in seeming astonishment. "Why, the party hasn't begun yet. Haven't they told you? Madame Cavallini is going to sing."

"Thank you, Mr. Van Tuyl," said Livingstone with dignity. "I'd rather my wife hear Madame Cavallini across the footlights. A touch of prejudice on my part perhaps, but don't let it bother you. Good night, sir."

## CHAPTER II

### THE REV. THOMAS ARMSTRONG GIVES ADVICE TO A MAN AND RECEIVES SOME FROM A WOMAN

*When Eve upon the first of men  
The apple pressed with specious cant,  
Oh, what a thousand pities then  
That Adam was not Adamant!*

—Hood.

*Surely a woman's affection  
Is not a thing to be asked for, and had for only the asking.  
When one is truly in love, one not only says it, but  
shows it.*

—Longfellow.

“WELL, Tom, here we are at last,” exclaimed Van Tuyl cheerily. “Now, what have you to say to me, my dear boy?”

“I’d have gone downstairs, but I’m not dressed, as you see.”

“Nonsense, my boy, I think you’re very good to come at all.”

Then in order to allow Tom to come to the

question in his own good time, Van Tuyl began to chat of other matters.

"I don't remember if you're interested in terra cottas, Tom, but if you are —"

He lifted a small vase from off the mantelpiece.

"Here's something that came in last week. It's a lekythos of the time of Pericles. Look at the exquisite grace and freshness of those figures! And to think that the hand that made them has been dust two thousand years!"

"Er — very pretty — very pretty indeed!" said Tom, not in the least interested.

Van Tuyl replaced the vase on the mantelpiece with a sigh.

"Two thousand years! I wonder where we were then, eh, Tom? But I think you care more for pictures than for terra cottas, don't you? Come and look at my new Millet. It's in my room where I can see it every morning just as soon as I wake up. By Jove! He's a wonderful fellow, that Millet, and some day he's bound to be recognized, even if —"

Tom stood his ground.

"Thanks, sir, but if you don't mind I'd rather

stay here," he said firmly; "I want to — to talk to you —"

"Of course, just as you say."

Tom was growing more awkward and embarrassed every moment.

"I don't quite know how to begin, sir, as it's a rather important — and at the same time a rather — a rather delicate matter, but — but — I'm not by any chance keeping you from your guests?"

"Not at all. Fire away!" smiled Van Tuyl.

"But it's er — er — something that I really feel I ought to — er — I mean to say er — I — er — consider it in the light of — an obligation — to — er — to —"

"Tom!" interrupted Van Tuyl.

"Yes, sir."

Van Tuyl put his hand confidentially on Tom's shoulder.

"It's about Susan, isn't it?"

"Yes — in a way, but —" replied Tom, still more awkwardly.

"Then it's all right, my boy," said Van Tuyl heartily. "I'm as glad as I can be."

"But what's all right?" asked Tom perplexed.  
"I'm afraid, sir, I don't follow you."

"Why, aren't you asking me if—" Van Tuyl paused and looked at him sharply.

"I'm sorry, sir, but it's advice I wish to offer you."

"Advice?" echoed Van Tuyl.

"Yes, I regret it, sir, but I consider it my duty."

Van Tuyl took a long, questioning look at Tom and seated himself.

"In that case, pray go on; won't you sit down?"

Van Tuyl lighted a cigar.

"No, thanks, I think I'd rather stand. Mr. Van Tuyl!" he burst out ingenuously, "I suppose some people would say that after all you've done for St. Giles and me it wasn't in my place to suggest anything."

"Nonsense, Tom," said Van Tuyl lightly, then he added as he took another long look at the young clergyman. "Do you know you're getting to look like your dear mother every day?"

"No, am I?" smiled Tom, and for the moment

his face lost its determined, dogged expression. But instantly he returned to the attack and assumed what Susan was wont to call "his preachy, pulpit manner." "But after all I'm your rector and I feel I've got to — to —"

"Quite right, my boy," said Van Tuyl, realizing for the first time something of what was coming, "I respect your feelings. Well?"

"Do you know, Mr. Van Tuyl, there's a woman downstairs whose reputation is — is — well — questionable, to say the least?"

"Whoever she is, Tom, she's one of my guests," said Van Tuyl calmly.

"But don't you realize, sir," persisted Tom, "she's a woman whose — whose immoralities are notorious?"

"Tom! Tom!" said Van Tuyl sternly.

"Excuse me, sir, I'm speaking as the rector of St. Giles."

Van Tuyl bowed his head.

"Go on," he said in an ominous tone.

Unconsciously Tom's "pulpit manner" became more pronounced: "A type that disgraces even the effete and vice worn civilization from which it

springs, but from which, thank God, our country has been comparatively free."

"Ah!" said Van Tuyl politely.

"We have our sins, sir. I know them well," said Tom. "But vice till now was forced to crawl her way through poverty and darkness or bask in the false light of an abandoned stage. She never dared to rear her slimy head and look into our homes, nor touch the white hands of our wives and daughters!"

"And nieces?"

"And nieces," added Tom hastily. "And is it time now, after all these years of honest decency to open wide our doors to a Du Barry? To welcome Messalina to our hospitable board?" resumed Tom.

"It isn't Sunday, Tom," said Van Tuyl, mildly.

"I ask you, sir, as friend and clergyman, is it fair, is it wise, is it right — that your pure threshold should be crossed by Madame Cavallini?"

There was a pause, while Van Tuyl looked steadily at the clergyman.

"How old are you, Tom?" he said at last.

"Er — er — twenty-eight," answered Tom, lamely.

"I wish I were twenty-eight," said Van Tuyl with a wistful smile. "Life's a simple thing when you're twenty-eight."

"Yes," said Tom, loftily. "If one has standards — yes!"

"Standards?"

"Of right and wrong, I mean," persisted Tom.

"Oh, yes — I had those standards once."

"Once, sir?" echoed Tom in a sharp tone.

"And then one day I got 'em all mixed up — and the right seemed wrong and the wrong seemed right, and I just didn't know where I stood."

"Oh, come, sir!"

"And now I'm fifty-one years old — and —" Van Tuyl gave a chuckle — "well, I'm dashed if I ever got 'em straight again."

"Oh, sir, don't talk that way," said Tom, distressed. "It isn't worthy of you — you're too big a man to —"

"Oh, I've learned a few things, though — stray spars which I clung to through all this storm and ocean — just a few stray spars, Tom, but some-

how they managed to hold me up. One is how to value people that are good — that's why you're rector of St. Giles's, my boy. And another's how to pity people that are — ”

“ Bad? ” said Tom, promptly.

“ No, not bad, my boy — there are no people that are utterly bad. But there are some poor devils who find it harder to be good than you — that all.”

“ I've been a fool, sir, ” said Tom, impulsively. “ I might have known there wasn't a word of truth in what that puppy said.”

“ What puppy? ” said Van Tuyl, looking up suddenly.

“ A young he-gossip, sir, who reeled off lies about this woman. And I was ass enough to believe him and come to you and talk like a — like a confounded prig. I wonder you don't throw me out of the house, sir! ”

“ You're my rector, Tom, ” said Van Tuyl with a twinkle in his eye.

“ Do you think you can forgive me, sir? ” exclaimed Tom, penitently.

“ There's nothing to forgive, my boy, ” smiled

Van Tuyl, as he arose from his seat. "And now run downstairs and ask Susan for some supper."

"But I'm not dressed," said Tom.

"Oh, nonsense! Still, if you'd rather go up to the library she'll bring it to you there. Don't tell me you're not hungry!" exclaimed Van Tuyl, clapping Tom on the shoulder. "You're twenty-eight years old, Tom—Hello! Who's this?"

Van Tuyl turned toward the staircase. There was the sound of many voices and of laughter; the orchestra in the drawing-room had just struck up the strains of a beguiling, slow Strauss waltz. Then above all the babble and the tumult and the laughter came the sound of a woman's voice, speaking in broken English.

"Go 'vay—go 'vay! You must not come vit' me! No! No! I 'ave to rest jus' for von leetle minute bevore I sing!" cried La Cavillini.

She stood at the top of the staircase for one moment, laughing gayly down upon the group of men of all ages, who were imploring her to dance with them. She was a bewitching little foreign creature—very beautiful, in a dark, Italian way. She was marvelously dressed in voluminous gauze,

over both the bodice and skirt of which were scattered tiny roses. Her black hair hung in cork-screw curls on either side of her face and three long, soft curls hung down her low cut back. Crowning her hair was a wreath of roses. She wore long diamond earrings, a *rivière* of diamonds was about her neck, and many jewels gleamed upon her corsage and on her wrists and hands. She carried a fan and a bouquet of white violets in a silver filigree holder. Her voice was soft and her gestures quick and birdlike. Indeed, as Tom Armstrong caught his first glimpse of her she seemed like some exquisite, gleaming, little humming-bird which had that moment alighted at the head of the staircase. Her back was toward both Tom and Van Tuyl.

“But it is my waltz, Madame!” cried one of the young men, three steps below her.

“Don’t listen to him, Madame!” exclaimed another young man, striving to thrust his rival aside. “You know you promised me —”

“Oh, gentlemans, vhy you make such a beeg, beeg noise?” cried Cavallini, saucily.

“Because you’re driving us crazy, Madame!”

called a deep bass voice. "We want to dance with you! Can't you understand?"

The little prima donna raised her eyebrows and struck a mock serious gesture.

"Vhat? *Me*—poor little me? You beeg, bad boys, you make of me—'ow you say?—vone seelly joke!"

"We don't!" "It's true!" "Of course it is!" came the chorus.

La Cavallini threw back her head and laughed.

"Gentlemans! Gentlemans!" she said. "Vy don't you go and make de love to dose be-e-auti-ful American ladies vaiting for you downstairs?"

"But I want to make love to you!" called one gallant.

"And I!" "And I!" "Me, too!" came the babble.

"Ouf!" and the little singer shrugged her shoulders. "You cannot all make de love to me — so look — so look — I tell you — ve will make a bargain."

The men were clustering about her now, the staircase was crowded.

"You shall not *any* of you make de love to me!"



"SHE TURNED TOWARD VAN TUYL, STILL LAUGHING"



I stay here vit Meestaire Van Tuyl — until I sing. But leesten, now! Which one of you, 'e catch this preety flower?" — from the flowers of her corsage she plucked a pink camelia and held it aloft above their heads.

"Look! Which one of you 'e catch dis — 'e drive me 'ome!"

The babble on the staircase rose into a gentlemanly riot. Rita threw the flower. There was a mad scramble down the stairs, while La Cavallini, watching the fracas, clapped her hands.

"Run — run — queek — qwick! 'E has fallen himself down, that little Meestaire! Povrino! All r-r-right, all r-r-right — you, Meestaire, vit de beeg mustache — Bene — capito! You take me 'ome!"

She kissed her hand to the rescuer of her flower and turned toward Van Tuyl, still laughing.

"Dey are so frightfully funnee, dese American gentlemans —"

The words died upon her lips as, for the first time, La Cavallini caught sight of Tom. He had been standing perfectly still, staring at her,

throughout the entire scene on the staircase. There was an instant's pause, during which the diva stared at the clergyman. Her glance seemed to embarrass Tom.

"I beg your pardon!" he exclaimed, and, bowing, went quickly down the stairs.

Leaning forward, across the balustrade, La Cavallini followed him with her eyes. Then, turning to Van Tuyl, she asked quite simply:

"Please, who is dat young man?"

"Tom Armstrong," answered Van Tuyl.  
"He's my rector."

"Rectore?" echoed the singer. "Vhat is dat?" she asked vaguely.

"He's a clergyman."

"Cler-gee-man? Vhat is dat, please?"

"He's an abbe—a priest, you know," explained Van Tuyl.

"Ah-h!" said La Cavallini, comprehending at last.

"Ah!" she continued, almost to herself.  
"Den it vas *dat*."

"What?" questioned Van Tuyl.

The singer turned away.

"Oh, I dunno. Jus' somet'ing in his eyes—it was so defferent to de odder American gentlemans."

"My dear Rita!" laughed Van Tuyl, as he gazed at her admiringly. "I don't suppose he'd ever seen anything like you in all his life."

"No? My Lor-rd! 'Ow very sad!" said Rita, impishly.

She leaned across the balustrade again, as though to catch another glimpse of the young man.

"An 'e vas 'an'some, too! So 'an'some!" she cried, provokingly, turning to Van Tuyl.

Van Tuyl gave a chuckle.

Hearing him, La Cavallini turned and caught his eye. They both laughed.

Van Tuyl, still laughing, came toward her. He took her in his arms.

"Rita, you little monkey, you!" he cried, half chidingly.

La Cavallini closed her eyes. There was a smile of quiet triumph on her lips.

"De beeg Amer-r-ican, 'e like 's leetle frien' to-night — eh — yes?" said La Cavallini, teasingly.

"I don't think he could help it if he tried!" laughed Van Tuyl.

"Den, if 'e like 'er"—Rita paused and looked at him doubtingly.

"Well," asked Van Tuyl, "what were you going to say?"

"Den, please, vy don 'e keess 'er?" she purred softly.

"There," said Van Tuyl, as he kissed her. "There, now! How about that?"

La Cavallini drew away from him suddenly, and crossed the room.

"My Lor-r-rd! I 'ave forgot somet'ing!"

"What is it?" asked Van Tuyl, following her.

"I have forgotten dat I am, oh! mos' fr-r-rightfullyee angree!"

"Not with me?"

"Si — si!" said Rita, nodding her head.

"But why? What have I done? My dear child —"

"You know," she retorted briefly.

"My dear, I don't. Frankly, I haven't the least idea."

La Cavallini sat down and gazed at him very seriously.

“ Ssh! You mus’ not say t’ings like dat — dey are not tr-r-rue! You ’ave treat me ver’ bad to-night! Yes, you ’ave tr-r-reat me qvite, qvite — onspikable! ”

Van Tuyl looked at her in astonishment.

“ Why, I’ve invited you to my house, Rita. I’ve introduced you to my friends. I’ve entertained you before all the world. Isn’t that exactly what you wanted? ”

“ You ask me to your soiree — dat is tr-r-rue! ” cried La Cavallini, indignantly. “ But you aske me as an artiste — not as a femme du monde! ”

“ That is not so! ” declared Van Tuyl.

“ Ah, no? ” she retorted in a flash. “ Den, please vhy you ask de odder singers, too? ”

“ Now, Rita, listen — ”

“ I vill not leesten! You t’ink I am a leetle — vhat you say — donnacia — une p’tite grisette — ”

“ My dear, you know I don’t think anything of the sort — ”

“ An’ eet is not to-night a-lone — oh, no! ”

Eet is two — t'ree mont's — all de time since  
fir-r-r-rst I come to your mos' ver' diz-a-gree-a-  
ble countree! A-ah! Eet vas not like dis at  
Millefleurs — I vas not dere a singer-r-r-r from  
de opera — at Millefleurs I vas a qveen!"

"Millefleurs! Our palace of a thousand flow-  
ers!" sighed Van Tuyl at the recollection.

La Cavallini's face softened.

"Do you r-r-remember de night I sing to you  
de Schubert Serenade, when you walk up an' down  
below de vindow — ye-es? An' all de r-r-roses in  
de vor-r-rld, dey blossom in de moonlight? Dere  
vas no vind — de sea vas qvite still — an' you  
valk up an' down — up an' down — an' alvays I  
sing to you — an' sing — an' sing — an' de vind  
an' de sea an' de beeg gol' moon — dey all of dem  
leesten to me!"

"Ah!" said Van Tuyl, rousing himself.  
"That was Millefleurs. The roses there had  
brought me back my youth. I came home and  
lost it, dear. I'll never find it again!"

"What you mean — please?" asked Rita, per-  
plexed.

"I'm fifty-one years old," answered Van Tuyl.

Rita instinctively drew away from him a little.

“That frightens you?”

“Ah, no — but —”

“I know how you must feel,” said Van Tuyl very gently. There was a pause. Neither of them spoke for several moments. Then: “Rita!”

“Vell?” said La Cavallini.

“Rita, suppose we finish our — our friendship — suppose we end it here to-night.”

“To-night?” said Rita.

“Give me your hand!” exclaimed Van Tuyl. “There! Now we can talk! I’m fond of you, dear — I always shall be that — but already I’m beginning to disappoint you. And I’m afraid I’ll do it more and more as time goes on. Look at my hair! There wasn’t any gray in it last year — at *Millefleurs*! But now — and next year there’ll be more! And I’ve begun to be a little deaf and fall asleep in chairs and dream about to-morrow’s dinner. My rheumatism, too, came back last week —” Rita winced and drew away her hand. “Don’t blame me, dear. I can’t help getting old.”

"Don'—don'—talk dat vay!" she cried nervously.

"God knows I'm not complaining!" Van Tuyl went on quickly. "I've lived my life—and it's been very sweet! I've done some work, and done it pretty well, and then I've found time to enjoy a great many of the beautiful things that fill this beautiful world! Among them, my dear"—and he bowed profoundly—"I count your voice—and you! And yet the fact remains I've lived my life. I'm in the twilight years. Oh! They're golden yet, but that won't last, and they'll grow deep and dim until the last tinge of the sunset's gone and night comes—and it's time to sleep. But you! Good Lord! your life has just begun, Rita! Why, the dew's still on the grass—it's sparkling brighter than your brightest diamonds!" He touched her jewels playfully. "You wear the morning like a wreath upon your hair. Don't lose all that, my dear—don't waste your springtime on a stupid fellow fifty-one years old!"

"All r-r-right!" she said coldly, and turning away she began to whistle softly to herself.

"What's the matter?" said Van Tuyl, watching her closely.

Rita shrugged her shoulders.

"Vone more—'ow you say?—frien'sheep feenished!" she cried in a hard voice. "Vone more!" Again she gave a shrug. "Oh, che m'importa — ce ne sono altri!" She yawned ostentatiously and sniffed her bouquet.

Van Tuyl looked at her keenly. "Rita?"

"Vell — Meestaire Van Tuyl?"

"Haven't you ever — loved someone?" he asked her.

"'Ow you talk? 'Ave I not love you two — three years!"

"I don't mean that," Van Tuyl went on gently. "Isn't there someone whose memory is dear and — and sort of holy — like an altar-candle burning in your heart?"

"No," she said in a bitter, hard voice.

"Think back — way back," he continued, still very gently. "Didn't someone ever make you feel so tender that you didn't know whether to laugh or cry at the thought of him? Wasn't there ever someone you wanted to help so much that —

it — it hurt you, like a living pain? Wasn't there someone who — ”

Rita sprang to her feet.

“ Basta! Basta! Stop eet — don’ — don’ ” — A moment later more softly she asked: “ 'Ave you felt — like dat? ”

“ Yes,” Van Tuyl nodded.

“ Who was she? ” asked La Cavallini.

“ Just a girl. Not wonderful or beautiful or gifted — and yet — she meant the world to me.”

“ What 'appened? ”

“ She died before I ever told her that I loved her.”

La Cavallini turned her head away.

“ Eet vas a good t’ing — dat she die so soon.”

“ What? ” asked Van Tuyl.

“ Sometime I vish dat I had died before — I ever-r 'ear-rd dose vor-r-ds, ‘ I lo-ove you,’ ” said Rita.

“ What do you mean? ”

La Cavallini was ironic now, and as she spoke she gave a curious little shiver. “ I never-r tol’ you of my fir-r-rst so bee-eautiful r-romance? No? Vell, I do not often t’ink of eet — eet make

me feel—not—nize." She paused and then continued. "Eet vas in Venice. I vas jest sixteen years ol'—I play de guitar wid de serenata. Ah, Madonna! Come sembra lontano!" she sighed.

Again as she spoke, La Cavallini turned her head away from him. "Dere was a young man come sing vit us—Beppa 'is name vas—Beppa Aquilone. 'E was 'an'some—an' 'e 'ad nize voice—oh, very light, you know—but very simpatico. Ve stan' together-r an' have—I dunno—vone, two duets. An' so eet goes for two—t'ree weeks, an' every time 'e smile an' look at me my 'eart-r-t is full wid gr-r-reat beeg vishes an' I feel like everyt'ing in all de vor-r-rld is new an' bor-r-rn again—an' so vone evening 'e tells me dat 'e love me—an' I feel 'is 'ot br-r-reat' like fir-r-re upon my face—an' de beating of 'is 'ear-r-rt like str-r-rong blows 'ere—against my own—an' den 'e sleep. But I—I do not sleep. I lie so steel an' qviet, an' in my mind I have vone t'ought—'Is dis vhat people mean when dey say—lo-ove?' An' so de 'ours go by, vhat, an' de night is feenish, an' a—a—'ow you say?—

a long theen piece of sunlight, it c-r-leep in through my leetle vindow an' it shine on Beppa vhere 'e lie. An', oh! 'e look so young — an' den de sunlight — 'ow you say? — eet tease him, an' so half vake up, an' 'e veenk 'is eyes an' say, ' Ah! Rita, ti amo! ' an' den 'e sigh an' put 'is 'ead 'ere — on my shoulder — like a leetle bab-ee dat is tir-r-red, an' 'e go to sleep again. Ah — oh! " With passionate tenderness she went on. " I put my ar-rrm about 'im an' I smile an' t'ink, ' For lo-ove I vaited all night long, an' wid de day — it come! ' "

" And so it does, my dear," said Van Tuyl.

" You t'ink so? Vait! " cries La Cavallini in a bitter voice. " In twelve 'our — twelve 'our — 'e sell me to an English traveler — for feefty lire! At fir-r-rst I t'ink I die — I soffer so. An' den at las' I on'erstan' — an' laugh — an' know dat I 'ave been vone gr-r-reat beeg fool — "

She clenched her hands and struck them together. " A fool to t'ink dere vas some better-r love — a love dat come at mor-r-ning an' shine like sunshine " — she threw out her arms in a wide gesture — " yes, all t'rough de day."

"There is," said Van Tuyl, positively.

"Dat is vone lie! You 'ear? Vone lie!" cried Rita, fiercely. "Love is a str-r-ruggle — ver' cr-r-ruel an' sweet — all full of madness an' of whisper-r-red vor-r-rds an' leetle laughs dat br-r-reak into a sigh! Love is a hunger!"

"My dear," interrupted Van Tuyl gently, "I think you must have suffered a great deal."

"Yes; because I 'ave believe vonce in a lie, but"—and she shook her finger—"not any mor-r-re!" She made a grimace at him. "Oh, vhy ve talk about dose bad ol' t'ings — see 'ere — I blow dem far avay! Pst! — pouf!" — with an enchanting smile. "Now, look! Dey are all gone!" Van Tuyl looked at her steadily but she did not answer. "You know what I t'ink — ye-es?"

"I never know what you think, my dear," smiled Van Tuyl. "I am far too wise!"

"I t'ink dat you an' I have not come qvite to de end — eh?" She burst out laughing. He patted her affectionately on the arm.

"My dear, you make me very happy," he said.

"So you vill drive wid me to-mor-r-row

after-r-noon at four?" inquired Rita, as though making some great concession.

"I'm honored!"

"I tell you somet'ing —" cried the little singer, cuddling up to him once more.

"Well?"

"You are naught-tee — but I like you f-r-r-rightfull-ee much!"

Downstairs a waltz was playing. Van Tuyl hastily kissed Rita's hand.

"Good Heavens! I've forgotten I'm a host! What will those wretched people think! My arm!"

"Vhen mus' I sing?" asked La Cavallini.

"Let's see. I've asked Artot and Capoui to do the duet from 'La Traviata' — and then I want the sextette from 'Lucia' — and after that we'll all be ready for the Golden Nightingale!"

She threw herself upon the sofa and gave a long sigh of relief. "De Golden Nightingale vill r-r-rest alone 'ere till de time is come. An', oh! Sen' someone vid r-red vine an' lemon juice — she is so tir-r-red she cannot sing vidout!"

"That's all? You're sure there's nothing else you want?"

"Dat's all."

Van Tuyl paused at the top of the stairs.

"You're beautiful to-night," he said, ardently, as he leaned on the balustrade.

Rita roared with laughter. She stared at him defiantly. "Vhy not? My star-r-r is Venus — I vas bor-r-n for love!"

"O love forever in thy glory go!" he quoted tenderly, and with a farewell kiss of his hand he went downstairs.

For a few moments La Cavallini lay listening to the insistent rhythm of the waltz. She whistled it under her breath, looking straight up into the air and "conducted" it gently with one swaying hand. Then her whistling ceased; she huddled herself up on the sofa and began to smile reminiscently. Finally, growing really drowsy, for she had had an exhausting night's work at the theater, she stretched herself out slowly like some dangerous young panther and closed her eyes.

She heard footsteps behind her, but not so much

as an eyelid quivered. Then she heard Tom's voice exclaiming:

"Mr. Van Tuyl, your—Oh! I beg your pardon. I did not know I was disturbing you. I was looking for Mr. Van—"

"Eh? Vat?" La Cavallini suddenly opened her eyes and gazed up at the clergyman saucily, like some inquisitive little squirrel.

Tom grew more and more embarrassed. His cheeks were fiery red. He turned to go.

"You ar-r-r-re going?" she exclaimed in a half imploring tone which seemed meant to insinuate he was leaving her all alone in this world.

"I beg your pardon?" said Tom, pausing, and then, Adamlike, taking one step toward her.

"Don't go—please." She smiled still more imploringly.

"But I—I—" stuttered Tom, at a loss for words.

La Cavallini went on beguilingly: "I vas jost begun to be a leetle—ow you say?—lone-lee? An' now a nize young man come—Oh! My Lord! I am so gla-ad!"

She smiled at him bewitchingly.

" You're sure — I'm not — intruding? " said Tom, still bashfully.

" But no! Come in — an' — 'ow you say? Oh, yes! make your-r-rself qvite to 'ome! "

" Er — thank you." Tom sat down on a chair some fifteen feet away from the sofa.

" Vhy you seet vay, vay over der-re? " cried La Cavallini.

" Why — er — er — I don't know — I "— Tom rose and came nearer. She was cajoling him sweetly now as she might some tiny baby that wouldn't go to sleep.

" Ar-r-r-re you afr-r-r-raid of me? I vill not 'urt you — no! I like de young men. Please come! Seet 'ere! "

She pointed to a chair at the foot of the couch.

" You're — very kind," said Tom as he sat down.

La Cavallini lay back and gave a sigh of satisfaction.

" A-ah! " She smiled at him. There was a pause, and then she asked roguishly: " What makes your-r-r face so r-r-red? "

"My face!" cried Tom in consternation.

"Why, what's the matter with it?"

"Eet is de r-r-reddest t'ing I evair see in all my life!" said La Cavallini, in a dreamy voice.

"It's rather — warm in here, don't you think?" cried Tom in agony.

"You t'ink so? I am qvite, qvite cool," said Rita, provokingly.

"That's — very odd," pursued Tom. "I'm afraid I — I haven't the honor of being — presented — er — er — my name's Armstrong."

"Ar-rm-str-rong! But dat is not all — eh? Now wait — no — yes — ecco! I 'ave it! — *Teem!*"

"Not Tim," said Tom, slightly nettled.  
"Tom."

"Tome!" repeated La Cavallini, vainly trying to catch his accent.

"Not Tome! Tom!"

"Tom. Dat's r-r-right — Tom! — Tom!" She laughed as she repeated it to herself. "My Lor-r-rd — what a funnee name!"

"It's not a real name," explained Armstrong.  
"It's just short for Thomas."

La Cavallini's mind became instantly illuminated.

"Ah — Tomasso! Si — si! Now I on'nerstan'! I vonce 'ave a frien' name' Tomasso — oh, yes, ver' long a-go! 'E 'ave jost vone leg; 'e vas — 'ow you say? — r-r-ragpicker-r-r!"

"Was he?" said Tom, somewhat abashed.

Rita surveyed the young man critically. "You look mos' ver' much like 'im," she remarked.

"Do I?" said Tom, pulling uncomfortably at his coat.

Rita was seized with a sudden happy thought. True to her race she expressed it immediately.

"Maybe you, too, are fine, beeg Amer-r-r-ican r-ragpicker — eh — no?"

"Madame," said Tom, severely, "I am the rector of St. Giles's!"

"R-r-rector?"

"Yes — I mean — I — I'm its minister — it's clergyman —"

"Oh, cler-gee-man! I have forgot!" said Rita, quickly. "'Ow beautiful! An' St. Giles — who vas 'e? Some leetle Amer-r-r-ican saint?"

"St. Giles," said Tom, sternly, "is one of the most important figures in the great history of the Church of England!"

"Is dat so? Anodder cler-gee-man — ye-es?" said Rita. "'Ow fr-r-r-rightfull-ee nize! Ve never-r 'ear of 'im in Ital-ee!"

"In Italy! Why, you don't live in Italy?" A thought had suddenly struck Tom. His look of astonishment showed it.

"I have a house in Florr-rence an' a villa on de Lake of Como — yes."

Tom gave a nervous, relieved little laugh.

"Oh, that's all right, then," he said. "Do you know what I thought for just a moment?"

"No. Vhat you t'ink?"

"I thought that you might be Madame Cavarini — or lini — or whatever her name is! You know — the opera singer?"

La Cavallini hugged herself with glee.

"You funnee — man!" she cried as tears of laughter came into her eyes.

"Forgive me — do!" said Tom.

"It vill be 'ar-rd!" said Rita with mock sternness. "You 'ave not seen La Cavallini, den?"

"I? — Oh, no. I don't go to the opera."

Rita leaned forward confidentially.

"You have not meess much when you mees La Cavallini. She is of a fatness —" She made an expressive gesture with both arms. "Oh, like dat!"

"You're sure?" asked Tom, doubtfully.

Rita nodded. "Vhy, she eat twelve poun' of spaghetti every day!"

"No!"

"Eh, yes," Rita went on enthusiastically. "An' ugly — oh, Madonna! 'Ow dat womans is ug-lee! Jost to look at 'er give vone de nose bleed!"

"But everybody says —"

Rita interrupted him with a gesture of her hand. "Leesten! Vone eye is made of glass — an' 'er nose — my Lor-r-rd! her nose! —

"What's the matter with her nose?" asked Tom, thoroughly interested.

La Cavallini covered her face with her hands.

"She 'as not got vone!"

"But surely you're mistaken — why —"

Tom's serious face grew graver.

"Jost papier-mache!" shuddered Rita.  
"Stuck on to 'er face! O Dio!"

"Well, I suppose it is her figure which makes them say —"

Again Rita interrupted eagerly.

"I tell you somet'ing ter-r-rible. *She 'as a 'ump!*"

"A what?"

"A 'ump!" explained Rita with tragic emphasis. "A 'ump upon 'er back!"

"You mean a hump?"

"Si, si!" said Rita, nodding. "'Er dress-maker in Paris — she tell me dat! Now, vhat you t'ink — eh?"

Tom rose quickly and gazed sternly down upon the glittering little creature.

"Do you really want to know?" he said, in his pulpit voice.

"Yes — tell me, please!"

"I think, madame, you have been guilty of the greatest cruelty!"

"What?" cried La Cavallini in amazement.

He fixed her coldly with his eye.

"Yes, cruelty; I repeat the word!" exclaimed

Tom oracularly. "To hear a woman on whom an all wise Providence has showered its choicest gifts deride, hold up to scorn and gloat over the physical failings of a less fortunate sister — for, madame, you are sisters in the sight of God — I say this heartless act deserves a far more serious rebuke than any I'm at — at liberty to offer."

La Cavallini could restrain herself no longer. This joke — it was too good! She covered her face with her pocket handkerchief.

"Ah — don' — don' —" she gasped, shaking with laughter.

"What if this unhappy lady does suffer from — exaggerated fleshiness," Tom went on relentlessly. "Beneath that bulk may beat the tenderest of female hearts. What if one eye is glass? The other, doubtless, is the window of a noble soul. And even though she bears a hump upon her back she may, with Christian patience, change it to a — a cross."

"Don' — don' — Dio mio! I cannot bear-r-r it!" cried Rita, still shaking with laughter.

By this time nothing could stop Tom. He was absolutely pompous as he continued:

"I am glad my few poor, simple words have touched you. Never forget them; and should the temptation come again, remember that a soft, sweet tongue is woman's brightest ornament."

"Tschk! Tschk! Tschk!"

Rita pressed her handkerchief over her mouth.

"Madame!" cried Tom, seeing for the first time that she was laughing at him.

"I cannot 'elp it. Oh, oh!"

Tom ground his teeth and struck one palm against the other as he turned away.

"Madame — you, a-ah!"

Rita, exhausted, gasping, wiped her eyes.

"Oh — oh! My Lor-r-rd!"

A liveried servant came from downstairs carrying a silver tray with glasses, a carafe and a decanter of wine.

"The wine, madame," said the servant, bowing.

"P-put it 'ere — on dis leetle table."

She indicated a little table by the head of the couch. The servant placed the tray upon it.

"Is that all, madame?"

"Yes — dat is all."

"Good night," said Tom stiffly, about to follow the servant downstairs.

"You are not going?" gasped La Cavallini.

"After what has occurred I see no reason for staying."

"All r-right," she said carelessly as she rose and occupied herself with an elaborate mixing of the wine and lemon juice and water.

Tom lingered. She paid no attention to him. He might have been a mile away for all she cared seemingly.

"Aren't you sorry for making fun of me?" he asked.

"Oh — so fr-r-rightfull-ee sorr-r-ry!"

And Rita began to toss the wine from one glass to another.

"You don't look it," said Tom doubtfully.

"Is dat so? Gooda-by!" said Rita calmly.

Tom walked to the stairs, paused, hesitated, then slowly came back and sat down in his old chair.

"Madame —" Tom spoke apologetically.

"Oh, I t'ought you gone!" she sniffed in a superior manner.

"So long as you're sincerely sorry," said Tom with dignity, "so long as you truly repent, I don't suppose there's any need of me going."

La Cavallini paid no attention to him. She kept on whistling gayly.

"Look! See how bee-eautiful I do it!" she exclaimed, her voice softening as she poured the drink from one glass to another. "Some vone who vas vonce ver' fon' of me 'e teach me dis."

Tom stared at her hypnotized. She filled both glasses.

"Der-re, dat is for you."

Tom roused himself into an effort. "Thanks, I — I don't take stimulants."

"Not even when I give dem?" she said softly. She held out the glass and smiled. Reluctantly he took it.

"Ah, dat is r-r-right!"

She lifted her own glass.

"Now what ve dreenk to, eh?" Suddenly: "Ecco, dat nice ol' cler-r-gee-man, St. Giles! You don't like dat, no?" Then, seeing his disgust, she added: "Den, 'ow you like it if I

dreenk to what I see in your eyes an' you dreenk to what you see in mine?"

She stared at him steadily with a mysterious look in her eyes. He could not take his gaze away from her. Eye to eye, neither faltering for an instant, both raised their glasses and drank. From below could be heard voices singing the sextet from "Lucia." "What are you? Tell me. I don't understand," said Tom in an odd tone.

Strange and broken as her accent was La Caval-  
lini's knowledge of English was by no means as primitive as her speech proclaimed. She had studied the language zealously under good teachers for years. Her mental grasp of it was excellent, so as Tom put this strange "What are you?" to her, some old lines from a half forgotten speech in an Italian drama in which she had played a sorceress came to her mind. Slowly, laboriously, as well as her mastery of the language would permit her, with her eyes still fixed on Tom, she translated this high-flown speech from her language into his:

"I am a cup — all full of priceless vine! I

stan' upon an altar built of gol' an' pearls an' paid for wid de blood an' tear-rs of men! De steam of per-rfume dat fills all de air; it is de t'oughts of me in poets' 'ear-rts — de white flowers lying at my feet, dey are de young boys' bee-auti-ful deep dr-r-reams! My doors are open vide to all de vor-r-rld! I shine in dis gr-r-reat dar-rk-ness like a living star, an' somewhere — sometime every man 'as 'ear-rd my voice — 'Come, O you t'ir-rsty vones — come, dere is vine for all!'"

Tom drew toward her.

"Who are you? What's your name?" he asked mysteriously.

"Oh, vhy you ask?"

Tom, never taking his eyes from her, said:

"Because I want to see you again — and again — I want to ask you things. I want to know you —"

"Ah, poor young man," interrupted Rita; "all dat can never-r be!"

Tom rose to his feet.

"It must — it's got to be!" he cried.

"Ssh!" said Rita gently. "Don' make a noise." Then impulsively: "Come 'ere!"



"YOU'RE CRUSHING THEM!" CRIED TOM



He came to the side of the couch.

"Kneel down — dere — like dat. Close — close, so ve can talk."

She picked up her bouquet.

"You see my violets 'ere — so sweet an' fr-r-  
resh an' bee-eautiful? 'Ow long you t'ink dey  
last?"

"A long time, if you treat them well," an-  
swered Tom.

"Now look!"

She pulled the flowers in handfuls from the  
bouquet.

"I pr-r-ress dem on my face an' neck; I feel  
dere fr-r-reshness on my eyes an' 'air-r; I dreenk  
dere sweetness like I dreenk new vine."

"You're crushing them!" cried Tom warn-  
ingly.

"What does it matter? I have keess dem —  
an' dey vere bor-r-rn to die."

She snatched up two great handfuls and cov-  
ered his face with them.

"Don' t'ink sad t'oughts of vhat mus' be —  
jost laugh an' love dem. Dat is all dey need."

She plied him with more blossoms.

"Take dese — an' dese — take mor-r-re. Oh, take dem all."

She threw a last handful into the air. The flowers fell all about them.

"Dere"—showing the bouquet holder—"it is empty. Not vone is left to take home vhen I go. You on'erstan'?"

"No; tell me—"

"Our meeting 'ere to-night," said Rita, tenderly. "What is it but a bunch of violets? Of flower-r-rs dat ve smell an' love an' t'row into de air-r? Why should ve take dem 'ome vid us an' vatch dem die? I t'ink it is, oh! much mor-r-re vise to leave dem here-re — like leetle memor-r-ries — all sweet an' white an' scatter-r-red on the gr-r-oun'!"

"Couldn't I keep — just one or two?" said Tom, in a low voice.

La Cavallini smiled.

"Dey vere not meant for keeping. Dere whole life was to-night!"

"I know," said Tom simply. "But I'd like to try."

She looked at him and shook her head.

"Ah, you are so young!" cried La Cavallini.

She picked up a few flowers from where they had fallen and put them in his buttonhole as he knelt beside her.

"Dere!"—Then with her fingers still in his buttonhole—"I wish—" She hesitated.

"What do you wish?" asked Tom.

Rita answered him simply—almost like a child. "I vish I knew some flower-r-rs dat would never-r die!" He seized her hands and kissed them again and again. She tried to wrench herself free.

"No—stop it—what you do—?" she cried.

At that moment Van Tuyl appeared at the head of the stairs.

"Ah, 'ow nize you are to come!" she said smilingly and with perfect self-control.

"You're ready, madame," said Van Tuyl with a formal bow.

"Qvite, qvite r-r-ready," said La Cavallini. She turned to Tom and held her hand out.

"T'ank you, m'sieur, for-r your-r kin' politeness. Gooda-by!" She bowed and gathered up her fan and gloves.

"But I — want to see you again!" cried Tom hoarsely, quite oblivious of Van Tuyl.

"You are — sure?" said Rita doubtfully.

"Yes," gulped Tom.

Rita became instantly the woman of fashion.

"Den vould you come to my 'otel to-mor-r-  
row after-rnoon at four-r? It is de Br-r-revoor-  
rt House, you know."

"All right; delighted," gasped Tom.

Rita smiled on him indulgently while from one corner of her eye she watched Van Tuyl.

"An' I vill take you for a leetle drive upon you-r bee-eautiful Fift' Avenue."

Van Tuyl bowed ceremoniously.

"And our engagement, madame — what be-  
comes of that?"

"Our leetle engagement is — is — 'ow you  
say?"

"Postponed," suggested Van Tuyl.

"Een-definite-lee," replied Rita, as she snapped her fan with an air of finality.

Van Tuyl bowed. She moved toward the stairs.

There was a murmur from below.

Tom, who had never taken his eyes from her, now stepped forward as he saw her leaving.

"Wait," he exclaimed, "I'm awfully sorry, but I—I don't know your name!"

"Oh, of course; I 'ave forgot; so stupeid. Vill you tell 'm, Meestair Van Tuyl?"

She turned at the head of the stairs and gave each man a sweeping bow. At sight of her the crowd at the foot of the staircase began to applaud La Cavallini. As she stood there poised like some beautiful humming-bird again her handkerchief fluttered to the floor. Tom, springing forward, picked it up. But before he could hand it to her she had vanished. He stood gazing at it blankly. The monogram, "M. C." in one corner of it, had caught his eye. Tom turned dumbly toward Van Tuyl.

"Do you mean to say you really didn't know who she was?" said Van Tuyl gently as he saw Tom's amazed look.

Tom shook his head.

"No. I hadn't the least idea." He paused and leaned eagerly across the balustrade. From below rose a woman's voice:

“ Non conosci il bel suol  
Che di porpora ha ha il ciel?  
Il bel suol i de’ re  
Son piu tersi i colori  
Ove l’aura e piu dolce  
Piu lieve l’angel \* \* \* ”

Tom stood leaning over the balustrade entranced, transfixed.

Van Tuyl gazed at him sadly. A world of remorse lay in the older man’s eyes.

## CHAPTER III

*With a smile on her lips and a tear in her eye.*

—Sir Walter Scott, “Marmion.”

’Tis well to be merry and wise,

’Tis well to be honest and true,

’Tis well to be off with the old love  
Before you are on with the new.

—C. R. Maturin.

*The fat is in the fire!*

—Heywood.

“O my prophetic soul! my uncle!”

—Shakespeare.

SUSAN PROVES TO BE A BRICK, AND A STOIC  
AT THE SAME TIME — SHE ALSO TURNS  
SONGSTRESS, BY REQUEST

LA CAVALLINI sang three times. Each song created a greater furor than its predecessor. Her final bow was the signal for a tumult of applause during the course of which the Rev. Thomas Armstrong very craftily made his escape. Tom paused not on the order of his going — either to say a perfunctory “Good night” to Susan or a word

of farewell to his host. That was one of the most human things about Tom Armstrong — when he was excited or hurt or had had his pride stepped on he invariably dropped his good manners and thought only of himself; after all it's a failing common to man!

While La Cavallini was singing he stood at the head of the staircase, holding hard to the balustrade, entranced completely. He was not even capable of summoning up his grievances against her — while she sang. But when at length the "Golden Nightingale" paused for breath, Tom came to earth with a sudden thud. He turned quickly to see if Van Tuyl was still beside him; but that courtly gentleman had long since vanished to fulfill his duties as host.

Tom snatched up his cloak and hat, hurried down the staircase and went out through the private door. He walked the streets for miles and miles that night before he finally reached the door of his rectory. And while he walked and thrashed the whole matter out with himself and cursed the woman — as far as a clergyman can! — for her impudence and her effrontery, there was

always before him, like some gleaming star, the knowledge that he was to drive with her at four o'clock to-morrow! So, eventually, Tom went to bed and slept like a plow boy.

La Cavallini meantime had become thoroughly bored. She lost no time in assuring Van Tuyl that she was tired to death and desired to go home at once.

Van Tuyl escorted her to her carriage. She refused to allow him to accompany her and when he held his hand out to bid her good night she greeted him with one cold little finger.

The night was wearing on, the ballroom was already half deserted, even the "Boston dip" and the two orchestras were beginning to lose their charm. The supper rooms were still crowded, so passing quickly through them, leaving Susan to act the rôle of hostess, Van Tuyl slipped quietly upstairs to the library, where he knew by this hour he would find his own little coterie. For them, and for him, it was still "the shank of the evening." At a small card table Lester Wallack and Miss Heron were playing a game of *bézique*. Surrounding them like a halo in evening dress

were half a score of men and women. Mr. Winter was there, Mrs. Scott Siddons, Ole Bull; close by Miss Heron's chair, watching her as she played her cards, stood a slim young girl with beautiful red hair. This was Agnes Ethel. Beside her chatting eagerly stood Augustin Daly. Everybody seemed to be talking at once. One thin man in particular, who had very small, snappy eyes and very large diamond shirt studs, was talking a very great deal.

"Who is that?" half whispered Agnes Ethel, leaning over Miss Heron's chair.

"My dear," said the actress behind her cards, "look out for him. That's Allston Brown. If you meet him assure him that you're only just fifteen, because, my dear, although in all other ways a perfectly charming man, he's a devil for dates. He's the *bête noir* of every editor in the city. Ask Charlie Dana or Horace Greeley—they know! He makes their lives a burden; he would rather write letters of protest and correction to the newspapers than eat. And he has a very good appetite, too! He can tell you the precise hour when Queen Cleopatra swallowed her first pearl."

and the exact moment when the Sphinx cut its first eyetooth. And the worst of it is he's usually right, or at least not a living soul of us has the courage to contradict him. But never mind, as I often tell him, one of these days he'll be an historian and then — if we're still alive! — we can all get on our hind legs and call him liar!"

She laid her cards down and raised her voice just a little.

"Allston, old man!" she exclaimed. "Just a moment! I want you to meet my young pupil, Miss Agnes Ethel. You're coming to our matinee of 'Camille' on Saturday, of course? I'm relying on you and Mr. Winter to see us through," and smilingly she shook her head significantly in the direction of the dramatic critic.

As Mr. Brown, full of ceremony, advanced to greet Miss Ethel, Daly turned to Miss Heron.

"A charming girl, Matilda. Where on earth did you find her? Do you know I think I'll give her a chance. She'd make an adorable little Western girl for my new play 'Horizon.'"

"Her red hair will carry her through, my dear boy!" said Miss Heron, "to say nothing

of her beauty. Technically of course, she knows nothing, so don't be too hard on her on Saturday. But she has grace and charm, and best of all — as you and I know, now that we're getting fat — she's got youth. After all that's the main thing — youth!"

"I was never thinner in my life, my dear Matilda," laughed the young manager. "But why on earth don't you go in for banting, or if that's too strenuous, why not take up the Boston dip? They tell me Mrs. Landor has lost pounds and pounds by it. They say she dances every morning for hours. It's simply killing the theaters, this infernal new dance. You can't drive the young people to see a play any more. This dip's become a mania. Why, at Delmonico's and other first class restaurants they're giving tea dances in the afternoon — killing the matinees as well as the night performances, confound them!"

"And why not?" replied Miss Heron. "It's a healthy exercise. Dancing keeps lots of young people out of mischief. Since you advocate it so strongly, I think I'll take it up myself. But as to the Boston dip keeping them away from the

theaters, that's ridiculous, my dear boy. They'll go quick enough when there's a play worth seeing; but now, when only this morning Mr. Winter assured me that my poor dear 'Camille' is dead and buried and when even you must admit, Augustin, that your 'Leah' has long since forsaken her first youth, what on earth is there worth going to see?"

"Ah," said Daly with a sigh, "if only I could find another theme like 'Leah'! What a chance that was! It raised me out of Grub Street!"

"But you never will, old man," chimed in William Winter. "And I'll tell you why. It's only once in a lifetime that one finds a theme in which pity and terror are so marvelously mingled."

"But I say, talking of themes," broke in Lester Wallack. "Have any of you boys stopped to notice what an extraordinary run of luck that old fox Dion Boucicault's having in London? Think of it! I was counting them up only this morning. That lucky devil's got eight big whacking successes all running at once."

"Eight!" echoed several voices incredulously.

“Yes, eight,” continued Wallack, beginning to count them on his fingers. “And every damn one of them a hit. There’s the ‘Flying Scud,’ ‘Arrahnapogue,’ ‘Hunted Down,’ ‘After Dark,’ ‘The Streets of London,’ ‘Elfie of the Cherry Tree Inn,’ at the Gayety and,” he paused to think, “just at the moment I can’t remember the other two. But they’re over there, and they’re doing business, that’s the great thing! By Jove! No wonder the old devil sits up and has the cheek to say: ‘I can’t understand why anybody should go to anybody else for a play but me. I can supply the world.’ It’s genius, that’s what I call it—absolute genius!”

“Genius! Fiddlesticks!” retorted Agnes Heron. “Unless by genius you mean an infinite capacity for taking pains, and other persons’ plots. I diagnose his case quite differently. The man’s a linguist. The trouble with you, Augustin, and all the rest of you ‘original American dramatists,’ is that you acquired a knowledge of French and German too late in life. Dion has forestalled you, that’s all. He imbibed all of the tongues of Babel with his mother’s milk.”

Two young men approached Miss Heron rather bashfully.

"Pardon me, Miss Heron," stammered one. "But we've made a bet and we would like you to be our Portia. My friend wagers me that Douglas Stuart was your original *Armand Duval*. While I claim—and I know I'm right—that your original *Armand* was Edward Sothern."

"Gentlemen, you both win," laughed Miss Heron, as she rose. "Douglas Stuart was Ed Sothern. But he never had the courage to use his own name until after his success as *Lord Dundreary* in 'Our American Cousin,' with Miss Laura Keene. My vis-à-vis here," and she waved her hand smilingly toward Mr. Wallack, "was equally delinquent in that respect. Doubtless, when you two young gentlemen were children or mere babies in arms, you frequently had cause to applaud and appreciate the histrionic endeavors of John Lester. Well, there's your man!" and once more she waved her hand gracefully toward the actor. "It was not until the recent death of his father that he presumed to call himself by such

an illustrious name as Lester Wallack. As for me, I never could see the sense of it all. Thank God, I always stuck to my own. Heron's a good old name and I'm proud of it."

An old white haired gentleman who had just entered, approached young Winter, who by all manner of means was the handsomest man in the room:

"My dear sir," he said, "though I've never had the pleasure of meeting you, I wish to thank you for that splendid article of yours in this morning's *Tribune*."

"Heavens!" exclaimed Miss Heron in a whisper to Daly. "The old gentleman's going to thank him for damning my poor 'Camille'!"

"I referred, of course, to your article on the 'speculator nuisance,'" continued the old gentleman. "Four times in the past fortnight during the absence of my wife and daughters in the country I have endeavored to witness a performance of Miss Lydia Thompson at Wood's Museum, and each time, unable to secure seats at the box office, I've been assailed by hordes of minions on the steps of the theater thrusting pack-

ages of tickets in my face, which they endeavored to make me purchase at advanced prices. But much as I admire the theater in all its branches and burlesque in particular, I'm a free born citizen and I will not be imposed upon. If what you say in your article is true, that hereafter these sharpers will not be permitted within forty feet of the theater, I shall endeavor to secure seats for to-morrow night's performance, as my wife does not return until Saturday. I thank you, sir, for your efforts on the public's behalf."

"Good Lord!" cried Miss Heron. "You don't mean to tell me they're reviving that old gag again! It's as old as Adam's wet nurse. Why, thirteen years ago, when I first played 'Camille,' we used to make that announcement, as regular as clockwork every week. It's as ancient as the old excuse for bad theatrical business — declaring there are too many theaters in town. I read an editorial on that the other day which amused me immensely. After all, including the two circuses, we've only got twenty, and you must remember how the town is growing."

"That's true enough," said Van Tuyl. "It

simply goes to show how history repeats itself. Why, only the other day Charlie Dana took me down to Horace Greeley's office. We were looking over some old newspaper files there. The first one I opened was a copy of the old *Mirror*, a paper long since dead and gone. Its date was 1826, and what do you suppose the leading editorial of the day was headed? 'Our Superfluity of Theaters.' Just for fun Charlie and I looked up the advertisements and counted 'em. They had four!"

A deep voice broke into the conversation.

"The whole trouble with the theatrical situation is that there are too many of these infernal dramatized novels; what with old Lady Southworth's 'Hidden Hand' and Miss Braddon's 'Lady Audley's Secret' and all these damnable mushy, sentimental Dickens' pot boilers, the American stage is going to the dogs."

The speaker, an extremely powerful and formidable looking young man, McKee Rankin by name, was just then luxuriating in his first New York success as the hero of the Boucicault melodrama "After Dark" at Niblo's.

"I've just left Miss Thompson," exclaimed a young newspaper man, Bronson Howard by name, who many years later was to turn playwright himself. "Good Lord! What a jolly woman she is! But just at present she's furious — threatens to return to England and all sorts of things. And one can't blame her. What do you suppose that fool manager of Wood's Museum has done? Not content with the crowds she's drawing in 'Ixion,' he wants to make a little extra money, so he's going to install a wild animal show down in the basement. Miss Thompson," continued the young man proudly, "showed me the note she's sending. It wasn't a note at all, really; it was an ultimatum. She ended by saying, 'I haven't the least objection to elevating the American stage as high as you please, but, my dear sir, I assure you I haven't the least intention of permitting either myself or my company to perform over a Yankee Augean stable.' Oh! And by the way, have you heard the latest one on P. T. Barnum? He's building a grand mansion in the country, you know; or rather his wife is. He gave her carte blanche and told her to spend as much as

she liked. So, among other things she engaged a foreign painter to come over here and decorate the three bathrooms. He painted the ceilings of these rooms exquisitely in little naked Cupids. The day the house was finished P. T. drove up to inspect it. It was his first glimpse of it, you see. The moment he saw the Cupids he sent for the town sign painter and three pots of paints. When poor Mrs. Barnum came in from her drive she found every mother's son of her blessed little Cupids enveloped in an impromptu pair of pantallettes. Some of them were yellow, some green, the others blue. The poor lady nearly swooned of course, but Barnum's excuse was extremely characteristic. 'After running the greatest moral shows on earth for all these years,' he said, 'I'll be damned if I'll let my reputation be jeopardized by a lot of babies without any clothes on.' "

Presently when Miss Heron and Miss Ethel rose to go, young Daly came forward and asked if he might see them to their carriage. As the actress was preceding them downstairs little Miss Ethel turned to the manager and said timidly:

"Mr. Daly, it seems almost too good to be

true that you're going to give me this great opportunity in 'Horizon.' But there's one thing I want to ask you now before we go any further. Miss Heron mustn't hear this because she doesn't agree with me on this subject at all," the girl explained hurriedly. "It's this. Of course, if I'm playing a simple Western girl, I'm only too willing to wear calico or print or any cheap little dress; but if I should succeed and later on you should cast me for a princess or a grand dame or even for the rôle of any ordinary rich American — I'm perfectly willing to buy my own dresses, but won't you please let me wear real silk or real satin or real brocade? Because, really — of course, I'm simply a novice. I don't know anything about it from a professional point of view but just as a young girl constantly going to the theater — it does seem to me" — and here she almost whispered — "that on the stage all the greatest actresses wear the most shocking clothes."

Augustin Daly had a singularly beautiful smile. For the first time that evening his whole face was alight with it as, leaning toward little Miss Ethel, he said:

" My dear child, let me tell you a secret. I, too, have my dream of the theater — a dream I've never mentioned to a living soul until now. You're quite right about the actresses' clothes — they're beyond words! Nothing but make believe rags and fustian! But this is my dream, my dear. I want to have a stock company — a company absolutely and utterly within my own control. And when I've got that I want to put on a play with real rooms in it — not these rotten canvas contraptions which we've been suffering from for years, but rooms with real doors, my dear — real doors!"

" What's that you're saying about real doors? " exclaimed Miss Heron turning round.

They were at the curb now and young Daly was assisting the two women into their cab.

" For once you've hit the nail on the head, my dear boy. In real life there is nothing half so blasphemous as a real door — when it's properly slammed. An artist can express in that one slam a whole volume of expletives which no dictionary would dare print. In emotional drama particularly, a real door could be made a crescendo. So

by all means, Augustin, when you bring this little girl out let us have real doors."

She held her hand out and said "Good night" to him with one of her rare and wonderful smiles. "God bless you, old man, and your real doors and good luck to our 'Horizon.' "

"Good night." Young Daly waved his hand gallantly toward the girl, who less than two years later was to create the rôles of *Frou Frou* and *Agnes* under his management. "Remember, Miss Ethel, you're the charter member of the Augustin Daly Company; you shall have all the real frocks and furbelows you want while I will startle the dear public with my real doors."

So with Matilda Heron as witness that famous company was organized which was to give to the public in due turn its Clara Morris, its Fanny Davenport and its Ada Rehan.

The last man to leave the Van Tuyl house that night was young Tangier Floyd-Jones, the youth who had caught La Cavallini's camelia and while waiting for her to redeem her promise had fallen asleep in one of the anterooms, with the flower still in his buttonhole.

"Party's over, thank the Lord!" exclaimed Van Tuyl to Susan, as he closed the front door behind his final guest and cast his eyes gloomily about his deserted rooms. Susan thought to herself that she had never seen her uncle look so old.

"Don't go to bed just for a moment, dear," he said. "Let's get a whiff of fresh air."

He walked to one of the long drawing-room windows, and raising it, stood drinking in the early morning air. Susan sat down at the piano and half unconsciously began to strum. Van Tuyl sank wearily into an arm chair.

"That's right, my dear. Play me something. Or, better yet, sing."

"Sing! Me sing! At this hour and after La Cavallini — why, uncle, it would seem like a sacrilege."

"Don't you believe it, my dear," he answered, with a wry smile. "One tires of grand opera arias very quickly. I've got a headache and my nerves are all on edge. Your voice will soothe my fevered brow, my child," he went on, trying to be jocular. "What's that song Tom makes

you sing for him on Sunday afternoons — sing that."

"Do you mean 'Christian'?" said Susan, rather astonished at his request, for she knew that as a rule he detested hymns.

"Yes, that's the one I mean!"

So Susan turned to the piano again and sang:

"Christian, dost thou see them  
On the Holy Ground?  
How the troops of Midian  
Prowl and prowl around?"

"The troops of Midian!" repeated Van Tuyl to himself. "I never appreciated that phrase before," and he smiled grimly. "Don't stop, my dear," he exclaimed, as Susan paused at the end of the stanza. "What's the next verse about? You know there's something very soothing about that soft sweet voice of yours to a tired old man."

Susan began to sing again:

"Well I know thy trouble,  
O my servant true.  
Thou wast very weary,  
I was weary too.

But this toil shall make thee  
Some day all my own  
And the end of sorrow  
Shall be near My Throne!"

"Not so effective as the first verse, is it, Susan?" he said when she had finished. "Sounds rather too much like a promissory note, don't you think?" Then changing his tone, he asked gently: "What about Tom, my dear? Was I right? Hadn't he something to say to you?"

Susan laughed merrily. "Tom! Why, we hadn't a moment to ourselves. How could he? Besides, as I warned you, I don't believe he had anything to say."

"Listen, dear," said Van Tuyl, and he took the girl's hand and patted it fondly. "You mustn't worry about the boy just because he threw a few sheep's eyes at a pretty woman to-night."

"Worry! Why, you silly old darling, what on earth should I worry about? It's the best thing in the world for Tom, Uncle. An infatuation like this will do him a world of good. It will make a human being of him. No," continued

Susan, laughingly, "it's not Tom I'm worrying about, it's Mme. Cavallini."

"Why do you say that?"

"For this reason, Uncle. Because I like her for one thing, and then because I have a woman's intuition and I'm afraid Tom's going to break her heart."

"Never mind about them, it's of you I'm thinking." Van Tuyl went on hurriedly. "Why, Susan, dear, if I thought that my bringing her here to-night was going to bring down any unhappiness on you —"

"Don't think anything of the kind, dear," said Susan, as she kissed him good night. "It can only last for a few weeks. You know she sails on January first. And in the meantime I'm going to assist Madame Cavallini in every way I can to give Tom a liberal education." She seized him by the lapels of his coat and shook him playfully. "Now don't worry any more about me, dear. Just you go to bed."

"Good Lord!" said Van Tuyl, as the door of the bedroom closed behind him. "What an awful mess I've made of it all!"

## CHAPTER IV

*How sad and bad and mad it was—*

*But then, how it was sweet!*

—*Robert Browning.*

### THE OLD YEAR GOES OUT IN A FLURRY OF SNOW—AND OTHER THINGS

THE last day of '68 was slowly merging into New Year's Eve, as Susan suddenly blew into the library of St. Giles's rectory, much to the astonishment of Miss Elizabeth Armstrong, Tom's maiden aunt.

“Why, Susan, my dear! This *is* a pleasure!” exclaimed the old lady, pausing in her task of arranging a huge bouquet of roses which had just arrived for her by special messenger.

“I've just dropped in for a moment to wish you a Happy New Year, Miss Armstrong,” said Susan, shaking the snowflakes from her muff and stole.

"But aren't you a little premature?" smiled Miss Armstrong. "It's only New Year's Eve, my dear. What nice, cold cheeks you have, Susan!" she said as she returned her kiss.

"I ought to!" laughed Susan. "I've been walking for miles and miles. It's one of those glorious days, you know, which just makes you thankful for being alive. Tom asked me to drop in at four and hear about the final arrangements for to-night."

"To-night!" echoed Miss Armstrong with some apprehension in her tone.

"Yes, you know — the midnight New Year service for the lost and friendless. It's going to be much more elaborate than usual. Tom's hired a brass band and torches, and the choir boys are to parade the streets singing hymns for half an hour before the service — just like the old English waits. He's laid out a much longer route than usual for them, too. They're to march from St. Giles's down to Eighth Street, then across to Washington Square, then up Fifth Avenue."

"Past the Brevoort, I suppose?" said Miss Armstrong with slight sarcasm. "He certainly

is leading them round Robin Hood's barn!  
When did he tell you all this, my dear?"

"Why, yesterday, at the circus," replied Susan enthusiastically.

"At the circus! My nephew, the Rev. Thomas Armstrong, at a circus! What *are* we coming to? This *is* an innovation! I sincerely hope, my dear Susan, that you were not responsible for taking him there."

"Oh, no," explained Susan gayly. "I was there with a big party. We'd all gone to see the new bareback rider, Melville. He's glorious; and such a figure. I ran into Tom by chance; he was escorting Madame Cavallini."

Susan paused and, watching Miss Armstrong narrowly, she began to hum.

"'We met; 'twas in a crowd. And I thought he would shun me.' But he didn't at all. On the contrary, Madame Cavallini asked us all down to the Brevoort to tea. I don't know when I've had so much fun. She's perfectly charming, Miss Armstrong. You know she sang at the Girls' Friendly the other night, and all the girls are simply mad about her. And she's got the sweetest

little monkey, Adelina — you'd love Adelina! And she's sent me a box for her farewell performance at the Academy to-night. Wasn't that sweet of her? But, by the way, where is Tom, Miss Armstrong? Is he upstairs?"

"No, he hasn't come in yet," said Miss Armstrong nervously. "He went out immediately after luncheon — er — to pay a call."

"At the Brevoort House?" smiled Susan meaningly.

"I don't know, my dear. Thomas never confides in me nowadays," said Miss Armstrong, still flustered. "But I'm sure he'll be here if you wait a few moments. He has a Deaconesses' meeting at a quarter of five and I *know* he never would miss *that*."

"Wouldn't he? Well, we'll see," laughed Susan; then noticing the flowers which Miss Armstrong was arranging in a bowl, "Oh, what lovely roses!"

"They're mine," beamed Miss Armstrong proudly. "They came just a moment ago, without any card, too. I can't imagine who can have sent them."

"Ha, ha!" said Susan chaffingly. "An anonymous admirer —"

"My dear, how foolish!" Miss Armstrong blushed and looked embarrassed but exceedingly pleased. "It is rather strange, though, I must admit. It's the first time in years that anyone has sent me flowers."

On the desk where she had evidently just addressed and stamped it lay an envelope directed to "Horace Greeley, Esq., the *Tribune*, New York City." Of course it was very bad manners on Susan's part, but as her eyes fell on the envelope she could not resist exclaiming slyly:

"But surely, Miss Armstrong, you don't suspect Mr. Greeley. Of course I knew you were very old friends."

"Certainly not!" said Miss Armstrong, snatching up the letter. "Even if he had been the mysterious donor, I don't think Mr. Greeley will ever send me flowers again after he receives this note. I have just written to order him to cancel my subscription to the *Tribune*. If I have anything to say about it that newspaper will never darken these doors again."

"Why, what's the poor old *Tribune* done?" asked Susan, exceedingly interested.

"It's a matter I shouldn't talk to you about, Susan — a matter which has upset me terribly. I wouldn't speak to you of it for worlds, my dear, only you look so gay and radiant to-day, I feel sure now that my fears with regard to you were quite unnecessary. So I don't mind telling you after all. Not half an hour ago, Susan, a young reporter from that impertinent paper stood in this very room — and what do you suppose he asked me, my dear? Me, Thomas Armstrong's only aunt!"

Miss Armstrong could no longer conceal her agitation. Her lips were quivering, her cheeks were red with indignation. Susan was leaning forward expectantly. Miss Armstrong, in order to gain control of herself, began to walk up and down.

"He asked me if it was true that before that Italian woman sails for Europe to-morrow morning, my nephew, Thomas Armstrong, intended to announce his engagement to the creature."

"But, Miss Armstrong, you can't blame the

poor man for asking you that," said Susan gayly. "And surely you can't blame the *Tribune* for trying to get the news. Why, as far as that goes, everybody's been asking me the same question for a fortnight at least."

"What presumption! What effrontery!" exclaimed Miss Armstrong.

Then turning questioner for the moment, she asked:

"What did you say to them all, my dear?"

"I didn't say anything — not a word! I merely smiled; a smile's as good as an alibi, you know, if a woman only knows how to deliver it. And," added Susan with rather a boastful air, "I do flatter myself, Miss Armstrong, that I know something about smiles. I could have talked my head off to all my questioners, and not one of them would ever have believed me, but when I smiled in that superior 'inside-information' sort of way I squelched the story once and for all. For, believe me, Miss Armstrong, there's not the slightest cause for either you or me to worry. Rita Cavallini is not going to marry Tom Armstrong. She isn't such a fool."

"But what about Thomas, my dear? Of course I'd never breathe this subject to anyone but you, Susan, but certainly that woman has demoralized him. She's taken him to the theaters; she's persuaded him to drag her to his Girls' Friendlys, and now you tell me yourself that she dragged him to a circus."

"And what of it?" interrupted Susan. "Hasn't it done them both a lot of good? 'That Woman,' as you call Madame Cavallini, has done more for Tom and taught him more of the things he's got to know than you and I, Miss Armstrong, and all his deaconesses could have done in a lifetime. If ever I consent to marry Tom I shall never rest until I've had him made a bishop, and in order to become an effective and efficient bishop one must at some time in one's life have been for a few weeks at least a man of the world. So please don't worry, dear Miss Armstrong. Tom's merely going through a chrysalis state. He has an obsession and it's going to do him a great deal of good. Obsessions, you know," concluded Susan sagely, "never last very long."

There was a ring at the doorbell, and the manservant announced "Mr. Van Tuyl."

"Ah, here's uncle," cried Susan cheerily. "He promised to call for me and drive me home."

"How d'ye do, Miss Armstrong! Real New Year's weather, eh!" he exclaimed as he took off his fur coat and driving gloves. "Well, Susan! I thought I'd find you and Tom here waving your arms and singing hymns and generally getting up steam for to-night's procession."

"Tom's out," smiled Susan. "I'm going to leave you here for a little chat with Miss Armstrong. Ralph will drive me home."

"Good idea, my dear! You know I never like to keep my horses standing." Van Tuyl walked to the window and gazed proudly down into the street. "Have you seen my new team, Miss Armstrong? Prettiest sight in New York! Look at that off mare there! Isn't she a little witch? The highest stepper on the avenue and a mouth like a French kid glove!"

"She certainly looks very wild indeed," said Miss Armstrong as she cast a brief and thoroughly uninterested glance out of the window. "Good-

by, my dear," she added as she kissed Susan. "Tell Ralph to be very careful of you, I always have such a terror of high steppers of every kind."

"Good-by, dear Miss Armstrong," said Susan; then added in a lower voice, "and please don't worry, I'm a weather prophet, you know; and though it's rather a stormy New Year's eve, I feel in my bones that we're all going to have a lovely Easter."

The moment the door closed behind Susan Miss Armstrong burst into tears.

"Oh, Mr. Van Tuyl, I — I am in great — in very great distress!"

"My dear lady, what's the trouble?" asked Van Tuyl in his tenderest way.

"I'm really ashamed to act like this — but — it's been so hard carrying it all on my mind — all alone —"

"There! — There! Elizabeth," said Van Tuyl soothingly. "Count on me."

"You're Tom's oldest friend — and his father's and mother's before him — and you're his leading parishioner, too — and the chairman of the vestry —"

"I know—I know!" interrupted Van Tuyl comfortingly. "And a very disreputable vestryman at that."

"Oh, save him, Mr. Van Tuyl!" cried Miss Armstrong, breaking down completely. "Save him from this dreadful woman."

"I've done my best," said Van Tuyl. "He came to me on Saturday about the new gymnasium. I talked to him as I would have done to my own son."

"What did he say?" exclaimed Miss Armstrong, drying her eyes quickly.

"He was very sweet, but somehow he wasn't there—the real Tom, I mean. It was only the outside shell of him that I was speaking to."

"I know what you mean! I've seen it! No matter whether he's here or in the pulpit or at his mission, he's with her!"

"Oh, come, come, Miss Armstrong; you mustn't be alarmed," Van Tuyl went on reassuringly. "She sails to-morrow morning, remember—we've less than a day to get through. Hello! What's this—" with a sudden change of tone as he glanced out of the window.

"What's the matter?" exclaimed Miss Armstrong apprehensively.

"Why, her carriage — and, by Jove! It's she. She's stopping at your door!"

"Not Madame Cavallini!" cried the old lady in amozed horror.

"She's evidently going to pay a call," said Van Tuyl coolly.

Miss Armstrong was on her feet in an instant; in another she was pulling at the bell rope.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

"Tell Roger to tell her I'm not at home," she said decisively.

"Don't do that, my dear," he cautioned kindly. "Let her come in. Perhaps I could say a word or two —"

"You'll make her promise not to write to him," she cried earnestly.

"I'll do my best," said Van Tuyl.

"There ought to be a law against such women!" Miss Armstrong went on vehemently. "Why, I'd sooner have a hungry tigress walk into this room than —"

"Madame Cavallini," announced the servant.

"My dear mees, 'ow you do, I cum in for vone  
meenute just to say gooda-by —"

She was dressed in a wonderful black velvet  
and ermine coat. In her arms, as if it were a  
baby, she carried a great ermine muff. From one  
end of the muff peeped a little monkey's head,  
adorned with a tiny pink satin turban with a long  
aigrette.

"Oh — what's that?" Seeing the monkey  
Miss Armstrong drew back with a startled cry.

"Vhat?" exclaimed Rita, noting her look.  
"An' I breeng my leetle bab-ee to show you. I  
call 'er bab-ee — because I am so — lone-lee —  
you too 'ave no bab-ee, so you on'erstan' — ye-es?"  
Seeing Van Tuyl, her tone changed.

"Oh! 'Ow you do, Meestaire Van Tuyl?"  
They shook hands.

"How do you do? It seems a long time since  
we've met," said he.

"De night I sing at you-r so bee-eau-ti-ful  
soiree! To me, also, it seem a long, long time."

"And Adelina —" Van Tuyl held out a finger  
to the monkey.

"Comment ça va, mademoiselle — hein?"

"Adelina?" exclaimed Miss Armstrong, shrinking still further into her skin.

"Ye-es; dat's her name — because she look so much like Patti in 'La Traviata.' I t'ink she 'ave forgot you, sir," she said to Van Tuyl.

"Ah! You ladies can forget so quickly."

"Ye-es? Sometime — I wish you men for-rget a leetle — too!" Rita took the monkey out from the muff and began to chatter Italian to it.

"Why, it's all dressed up!" cried Miss Armstrong.

"But sure-lee she is dr-ress!" echoed Rita. "Do you vant she go — 'ow you say? — na-ked? Dat vould be — ah! Shock-eeng!"

"The horrid little animal!" said Miss Armstrong.

"Tschk! Tschk!" cried Rita, warningly. "You 'ur-r-rt 'er feelings! Ecco! See! She begin to cr-r-y! Bellaza mia! Tu un' faresti male a nessuno!" she soothed the monkey, taking her. "I t'ink she is like me, Meestaire Van Tuyl," she continued, with a reproachful glance toward Miss Armstrong. "She is not 'app-ee when de peoples do not lo-ove 'er!" She slipped

the monkey into the muff again. "Ti amo — bambinello mio — si — ti amo!"

"Ugh!" cried Miss Armstrong, watching her.

Rita placed Adelina and her muff in a big chair by the fire.

"I put 'er 'ere an' she will take vone leetle nap. Dormi, bebina cara di mamma!" Rising and turning quickly to Miss Armstrong, she exclaimed: "Santi! I 'ave for-get! I 'ave a somet'ing to tell you fr-r-om Meestaire Tom!"

"You've seen him?"

"But ye-es — 'e dr-r-ive wid me," said Rita, innocently. "I leave 'im at de — oh, vhat you say? — de con-firm-a-tion class —"

"Isn't he coming home?"

"Ye-es — jost a leetle while, 'e say." The little singer held out her hand to Miss Armstrong. "So I come fir-r-rs' to make my r-r-respec' to you, dear mees, an' say gooda-by."

Miss Armstrong, paying no attention to the outstretched hand, turned to Van Tuyl. "When Madame Cavallini goes, I hope you'll step up to my sitting-room and have a cup of tea?"

He bowed.

La Cavallini's eyes fell on the flowers.

"A-ah! De r-r-oses — dey ar-rive all r-r-right? You like dem — ye-es? I 'ave chose each vone myself!" She smiled winningly at Miss Armstrong.

"*You sent me those?*" said Miss Armstrong in amazement.

"Jost a leetle sur-r-prise," she answered wistfully, "to r-r-remembair me two-t'ree days aftair I 'ave gone — so far!"

For a moment Miss Armstrong was speechless. Then:

"Thank you!" She picked up the bowl of roses from the desk and held them at arm's length as she left the room. "Mr. Van Tuyl will put you in your carriage whenever you're ready. Good-by, Madame. I wish you a pleasant voyage!"

"Vhat for-r she go avay so queeck?" asked Rita in wonderment at her repulse.

"I asked her to. Come here!" said Van Tuyl.

She looked at him and smiled.

"You little monkey, you!" and he smiled too.

“Now pretend for five minutes I’m your father confessor!”

“You vant to sco-old me — ye-es?”

Van Tuyl took her gently by the shoulders.

“Well, that depends. Has Tom asked you to marry him?”

“No.”

“And if he did?”

Rita turned her head away and spoke with sulky defiance.

“I vould not marr-ee ‘im — an Amer’can cler-gee-man — ‘e vould vant I stop sing-ing — an’ be so fr-r-rightful goo-ood — an’ live ‘ere in dis ‘orri-ble New Yor-r-rk — mos’ col’ diz-a-gree-a-ble place I evair see! Adelina, in two, t’ree mont’s she die — ye-es! And ‘e vould not let me go to Paris vhen I need de dress — an’ I vould be all bor-red an’ seecke. Mebbe I die — too — an’ den — every vone is gla-ad!” She dried her eyes resolutely with her handkerchief. “Oh, no, my frien’, I vould not marr-ee ‘im. No — no — dat vould be vone beeg meestake!”

“Then why do you lead the poor boy on?”

“Lead ‘im?”

"He's not like the young gentlemen you're accustomed to have circling round you — remember that, my dear! He's not a Baron Vigier or a Capt. Ponsonby —"

"But no, my frien'— but no! —"

"Well, isn't that the way you're treating him?" interrupted Van Tuyl. "Aren't you amusing yourself — just a little bit at his expense?"

"No — you do not on'erstan'— ah! It is so 'ar-r-rd to say! Now leesten!" She spoke very seriously. "'Ow long I know 'im? Two mont's? Ver' vell. In all dat time 'e 'as not spik to me a vor-r-rd of lo-ove — no, not vone leetle vor-r-rd!"

"What!" said Van Tuyl, amazed.

"At fir-r-rst I try to *make* 'im — oh, you know — for-r fun! An' den — ome'ow — I am so sorr-ee for-r 'im — an' I don' tr-r-y any mor-re!"

She sat down on a hassock at his feet and leaned against his knees. Van Tuyl put his hand on her shoulder.

"My poor little Rita!" he said, tenderly.

"Don't you know there's nothing in all this, dear, for you?"

"Oh, yes!" with a sigh. "I've so often say, 'Seelly woman, do not see 'im when 'e come to-day. Jost tell de gentleman down-stair-r-r you vant to sleep an' no-bod-ee shall vake you up!'"

"Well, why didn't you?"

"I say no-bod-ee — like dat! No-bod-ee in the vor-r-rld," she added shamefacedly, "ex-cep' jost Meestaire Tom! O Dio, come e dura la vita!" she sighed.

"So that's the way it went!" said Van Tuyl. She glanced up at him, inquisitively.

"I t'ink you smile a leetle — yes?"

"No, I'm not smiling, dear," said Van Tuyl, kindly.

There was a short pause. La Cavallini gave a sigh.

"Ah, my frien', I am vone gr-r-reat beeg fool — I — who 'ave believe I vas so vise!" She smiled at him and shook her head.

"Never mind, my dear," said Van Tuyl. "You're leaving us to-morrow."

Rita glanced up quickly.

“ You t’ink ’e vill for-r-get me — ye-es ? ”

“ I’m sure you hope he will.”

Rita looked away.

“ I t’ink I vill not for-get *’im* — or if I do — it take a long, long time ! ”

“ Ssh! Nonsense! Now think of all that’s waiting for you over there! Rome — and the spring in Florence — and Como, with the snow still on the mountains — and Paris too — why, you’ll see the first acacias on the Boulevard St. Germain — you’ll smell the lilacs when you’re driving in the Bois — and Gounod will be there — and your dear old friend Rossini! Think of the dinners at the Maison Dorée — and the violets in the forest of Compiègne! Think of the suppers Cora Pearl will give! Why, don’t you know what fun you’re going to have? ”

Rita shook her head despondently.

“ Oh, dere is on-lee vone t’ing dat I know! ”

“ What’s that? ”

“ I lo-ove *’im*! ” she cried, passionately. “ I lo-ove *’im*! ”

“ You’re going to make him suffer a great deal,” said Van Tuyl, warningly.

Rita unpinned a bunch of white violets from her wrap.

"Vhen 'e ask for-r me — jost give him dese — an' say it is — adieu." She kissed the violets and held them to her face in a sort of prolonged caress.

The door opened suddenly. Tom burst in.

"Well, did you think I was never—" His face flushed as he saw Van Tuyl. "Oh, is that you, sir? How do you do?"

They shook hands.

"I'm glad Madame Cavallini hasn't been waiting here alone! Whew! It's cold outside!" said Tom, pulling off his gloves. "I'm nearly frozen and I ran home, too! I'll just put some more coal on the fire and then we'll all sit down and —"

"I think, Tom, Madame Cavallini was just going," said Van Tuyl.

"Going?" echoed Tom, astonished.

"Ye-es, I mus' sleep a leetle befor-re to-night — my las' per-rfor-r-mance — I so vant to give my bes'—"

Rita moved slowly toward the door.

"Oh, come now, you're not going!" said Tom,

taking her hand and leading her toward her chair again.

“Please Meestaire Tom, de per-r-for-r-r-mance—” faltered Rita.

“Oh, that’s all right—it’s Mignon, and you know it backward!” Tom said as he drew her to the fire.

“You see!” she exclaimed, turning helplessly to Van Tuyl.

Roger, the man servant, appeared at the door.

“Miss Armstrong’s compliments, Mr. Van Tuyl, and tea is served in the sitting-room upstairs.”

“We’ll come up later!” said Tom, quickly.

Van Tuyl looked at Rita. Rita turned appealingly to Van Tuyl.

“In jost vone leetle while!” she said, imploring his consent with her eyes.

Van Tuyl shrugged his shoulders and passed out of the room. As the door closed behind him Tom gave one great “Ah!” of satisfaction and moved instinctively toward Rita’s side.

## CHAPTER V

*“I know that I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman; but I have the heart of a king, and of a King of England too.”—Queen Elizabeth.*

*Perdition catch my soul,  
But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,  
Chaos is come again.*

*Shakespeare.*

### TOM ARMSTRONG FINDS THAT LITTLE MINUTE THAT WE CALL TO-DAY

“THERE! Now isn’t this fine? I tell you it’s like a dream.”

Tom drew a long breath again and gazed at her triumphantly.

“Vhat dr-r-ream — please?”

“You — here is my big armchair in front of my fire — in my study.”

“A d-r-r-ream — ah, dat is vhat I am!” said Rita, wistfully. “A leetle dr-r-ream dat lose ‘er way an’ rest vone meenute in your sleep-ing ‘ear-r-t!”

“One minute? Always!”

“Ah, no, my frien’—to-morrow you vake up  
—an’ pouf! Dat leetle dr-r-ream—she is all  
gone!”

She smiled and snapped her fingers.

“Please don’t!”

“You ‘ave been ‘appee den—dese las’ weeks  
—ye-es?” she asked softly.

Tom looked her squarely in the eyes. “You  
know I have,” he said.

“I ‘ave been ‘app-ee—too!” she whis-  
pered.

“I say, don’t go to-morrow, Rita,” cried Tom,  
impulsively.

“Vhat you say?”

“Stay on till spring,” he went on.

“But ‘ave I not tell you I mus’ sing in R-r-rome  
nex’ mont’? An’ I go to Venice for de new opera,  
‘Aïda,’ Verdi ‘ave compose—”

“Don’t go. Oh, please don’t go!”

“An’ den I mus’ see Mapleson in London—  
an’ de R-r-russian concert tour begin in May.  
And dere in Petersburg Moussorgsky ‘e ‘ave com-  
pose an opera for me too—‘Boris Godunuff,’ ‘e

call it. And poor Arrigo Boito —'e 'as for me 'Mephistofele —"

"I don't care how many operas they've got for you. I just can't say good-by."

Rita's face became suddenly illumined.

"Den come wid me!" she cried.

"What —?"

"Go queeck an' buy de ticket!" cried Rita, becoming practical at once.

"Ticket?" exclaimed Tom.

"Ye-es — befor-re dey are all gone!" she cried, carried away by her own enthusiasm. "An' to-morrow ve stan' on de boat — you an' me an' Adelina — an' ve vave de 'an'kerchief an' trow de kiss an' laugh. Oh, my Lor-rd, 'ow ve laugh at all de stup-eed peoples ve leave behin'! Hein? What you t'ink of dat?"

"I think it's a wonderful idea," said Tom. "But I've got a meeting of the board of charities to-morrow at eleven, Patrick Crowley's funeral at twelve, and after dinner I offer my annual report to the vestry committee, and in the evening my boys —"

Rita gave a gesture of despair.

"I 'ave for-r-get," she cried, "you are a clerg-er-man!"

"And I forgot you were a golden nightingale."

After a short pause Rita nodded her head reflectively.

"I t'ink it is a vary good t'ing I go avay to-morrow."

Tom looked a picture of gloom.

"But you're coming back next year?"

La Cavallini made an impatient gesture.

"Ah, vy talk about nex' year — it is so far avay."

"In my profession one has to think a great deal about things that are far away."

"Den you are vary fo-olish — yes, you are. Leesten, I am ol' an' I know de vorl-ld. Do vhat I tell you now. You mus' r-r-remembair al-vays —"

"Well?"

"Yesterday," she said, tenderly. "It is a dr-r-ream ve 'ave forget. To-morrow — just de 'ope of some gr-r-reat 'appiness — some joy dat nevair come. Before, behin' all clouds an' star-r-rs an' shadow — nodings, nodings dat is

r-r-real, onlee de leetle minute dat we call to-day."

"To-day's so short." Tom's voice was bitter.

Rita smiled at him in a superior sort of way as though she were his senior by many years.

"Ah, you are young, my frien'. Jus' twenty-eight, you say. De time will come when you are glad to 'ave leetle meenute — so gla-ad you vould not t'ink to ask for-r mor-r-re."

Tom was beside himself.

"Madame Cavallini — Margherita — I —"

Rita shrank away from him nervously.

"No — no!"

A hand organ outside the window began to grind out "Il Bacio."

"Drat that hurdygurdy!" cried Tom.

"I t'ink it come jost in time!" said Rita, with a sly smile.

Tom goes over to the window and looks out. Meanwhile, she danced lightly and gayly about the room whistling and snapping her fingers in time with the waltz, while Tom gazed angrily out of the open window.

"Hi!" cried Tom. "Go away."

The waltz continued.

"Hi — you there! Stop that racket! Stop it this minute!"

The waltz broke off in the middle of a phrase.

"Take that monkey off my gate!" cried Tom, spluttering with rage.

At the word monkey, Rita rushed to the window.

"Mon-kee? Bon giorno, amico!"

And she broke into a wild storm of Italian phrases while Tom stood bored and disgusted.

She tripped gayly about the room, whistling and keeping time to the music.

"Hi, there!" cried Tom at the open window to the organ grinder in the street. "Take that monkey off my gate post!"

"Monkee?" cried Rita, picking up Adelina from the chain and hastening with her to the window.

"Bon giorno amico!" she cried, holding Adelina aloft for the organ grinder to see. She and the hurdygurdy man began to exchange compliments. In a moment she had possessed herself of the most important facts in both his and the monkey's family history.

“ ‘Ow funnee!” she cried, turning to Tom.

“ ‘Ees name it is Tomasso. You and de mon-  
kee ‘ave the same name.”

“ Tell him to go away,” ordered Tom, angrily,  
as he threw a quarter to the man. “ Tell him to  
go away at once.”

As Rita closed the window, Tom said, coldly,  
“ You talk to that man as if you had known him  
all your life.”

“ Ah! vell,” cried Rita, shrugging her shoul-  
ders. “ Vy not? Ve bot’ maka de music.”

Her eyes fell on a daguerreotype lying upon  
Tom’s desk. “ Who is dot young lady?” she  
asked.

“ That’s my mother,” said Tom.

“ You let me look at ‘er — ye-es?”

“ Of course.”

She took up the picture very tenderly and stud-  
ied it. Rita’s whole face softened.

“ Oh! she is bee-eau-ti-full!”

“ That was taken before she was married,”  
said Tom, looking at the picture over her shoul-  
der. “ My father always had it on his dressing  
table.”

"I t'ink — you look like 'er."

"She died when I was fifteen. It was my first winter at the boarding school. She'd come up to see me only two weeks before and brought me this"—picking up a small, worn book from the desk—"my little Testament. I'd expected a fruit cake — you can imagine how I felt. But now — there's nothing else I value quite so much."

Rita was still studying his picture.

"She look — like she 'old somet'ing in 'er 'eart — somet'ing dat make 'er 'app-ee — an' dat no vone know," she whispered. "Per'aps — per'aps it is de t'ought dat vone day she 'ave a son like you —"

Tom crossed his room and opening a drawer in the little cabinet began fumbling for something in a box. While his back was turned to her, Rita kissed the daguerreotype reverentially and laid it down.

"For-r-give —" she said to the picture as she laid it on the table.

"There's something here I've been meaning to show you," he said. "I keep it in this box with

my mother's little souvenirs." He took out a small package done up carefully in tissue paper. As he did so, a tiny little shoe in the box brushed against his hand. He laid it on the table and was about to read the contents of the package when Rita picked up the little shoe. There was a card tied to it with some words written upon it. Rita began to read it laboriously.

"First shoe worn by my son, Thomas Armstrong, June seex, eighteen 'undred an'—"

"Oh, yes!" said Tom, slightly embarrassed. "That's my first shoe. Let's see! I must have been three months old."

"An' she 'ave keep it wit' such care — an' write upon it."

La Cavallini's eyes were full of tears as she fondled the little shoe.

"Oh, she did that because she was very sentimental, I'm afraid," half apologized Tom.

"She did it because she lo-ove you — such a much!"

"Here's what I really wanted to show you, though." Tom unwrapped the little package he

had been holding in his hand. "Now! Look at these!"

"A necklace — ear-r-rings!"

"They were father's wedding present!" He held up a necklace made of seed pearls to which was attached a little gold locket of no particular value. "There! Isn't that pretty?"

"Oh, mos' bee-auti-ful!" cried Rita, admiringly.

"There's one of my baby pictures in the locket. I wonder how — oh, yes, I remember — you press the back and then it opens! There!"

He gave her the opened locket. She took it eagerly, looked at it, glanced at him, then broke out into irrepressible laughter.

"What's the matter?" asked Tom, abruptly.

"You are so — so fat!"

"Fat!" frowned Tom.

"You 'ave such beeg cheek — just like dis —" She puffed up her own cheeks, lost her breath and started laughing again. "You are de mos' funn-ee baby I ever see in all my life!"

"Well, my nurse didn't think so!" said Tom, defending himself.

He thrust his hands in his pockets and turned away.

"Vhat—? Oh, my Lor-r-rd!" cried Rita, startled. Then she began to laugh again, which only increased Tom's rage.

"Oh, very well. I'm sorry I showed it to you! I might have known that—"

"Ah, don' be ang-ree!" cried Rita.

"I'm not angry," he answered, without turning round.

"So? Den von' you tur-r-rn your 'ead—please?

"I go avay to morr-r-row!" She paused and looked at his back, lovingly.

"Mebbe I nevair-r come back. I t'ink you are de mos' bee-auti-ful bab-ee in de whole vor-r-rld!"

"No, you don't either!"

"Si—si! It is tr-r-rue!" she went on eagerly. Then softly to the picture:

"So good-by, leetle fat boy—good-by—good-by!" She kissed it twice and laid it down.

Tom turned just in time to see her kiss his locket.

"Thank you," he said.



"'OH, DON' BE ANG-REE!' CRIED RITA"



Rita shut the locket.

"Dat vas for-r 'im — my frien'— not you!"

She held out the necklace for him to take.

"Er — don't you want to keep him then?" asked Tom, awkwardly.

"Keep 'im?"

"Yes, and the necklace too! I wish — I mean I hope you will!"

"But — it is your-r modder's —"

"I know — that's why!" he explained, eagerly.

"But she vould not like it —"

"Of course I realize how you feel about accepting presents of jewelry from men, but I think in this case — it's — er — quite all right."

Around her neck was a magnificent string of pearls from which, at her waist, hung a diamond cross. Instinctively her hand went to her neck to unclasp the necklace.

"What are you doing?" asked Tom.

"I make for-r it de place."

She dropped her string of pearls upon the desk.

"Aha! I knew you would," cried Tom, giv-

ing her the rest of the package. "Here! Take the earrings too."

"Dio mio, dey are so lo-ove-lee!" said Rita, enthusiastically, as she laid her necklace on the mantelpiece.

"Can you see to put them on?" asked Tom, solicitously.

By this time the room was filled with twilight shadows. The fire, warm and mellow, was the only light.

"Oh, yes, I can see!" cried Rita at the mirror.

Tom watched her lovingly.

"You know how it clasps?"

"Ye-es, it is all r-r-right. Ecco! Are dey not becoming? Vhy you look at me like dat? Vhat you t'ink of — hein?"

"I was just thinking," said Tom, simply, "how mother would have loved you."

"Ye-es?"

"She loved everything that was beautiful and sweet and good. And then your music — that would have interested her so much. She was musical too, you know."

"Is dat so?" said Rita, intensely interested.

"Yes; that's why I kept her piano when the Worth Street house was sold. I put it over there, so when I'm writing sermons and get all mixed up I can just look at it and imagine I'm eight years old again and hear her dear voice singing 'Annie Laurie.' "

"An-nie Laur-r-ree?" repeated Rita, softly.

"That was her favorite song," he said. "I wish—I wish you'd sing it once—before you go."

"I tell you vhat—I play an' you vill sing."

"But I can't—I haven't any voice—"

"Come—where is it—in dis book'ook?"

She picked up one of the bound volumes of music lying on the piano.

"No—the big one underneath—page twenty-seven. But really, it's foolish; the idea of my trying to."

"Ah, here it is. Now light de candle, please." She put the volume on the rack and seated herself at the piano.

"It goes up to E—that's pretty high, you know. Of course I wouldn't mind if you weren't

a professional," he said, nervously, as he took his place beside her at the piano. " Give me the note when you come to it."

Rita played the little prelude.

" Is dat too fas'?"

" A little bit. That's better."

She struck his note and paused glancing up at him. He hesitated.

" Just wait till I clear my throat. It's so long since I've sung. Now I'm ready; go ahead."

" Maxwelton braes are bonnie

Where early fa's the dew.

And it's there—"

The door opened and Roger appeared.

" Beg pardon, sir, the deaconesses are waiting."

" Get rid of them!" cried Tom, angrily, without turning around.

" What, sir?" said Roger, aghast.

" I said, 'get rid of 'em!'"

Roger bowed and closed the door behind him.

Tom sang " Annie Laurie " through to the bitter end. When he had finished, Rita, without looking up at him, said softly:

“ It is a song of lo-ove.”

“ Yes, but I never knew it until now. Do you know why? ”

Tom leaned down toward her eagerly.

“ No; te-ell me.”

“ Because I never knew what love was until now.”

“ An’ vhat is lo-ove — to you? ”

She played a little idly as she watched him.

He turned and leaned on the piano so he could see her face.

“ It’s finding the woman you want to live with all your life — the woman who’ll show you the right way and follow it with you — side by side — shoulder to shoulder — making all the good things seem a little better — and all the hard things — well, not quite so hard! It’s knowing she’ll be with you at your journey’s end — when you’re old — and she’s old — and when you can smile and look into each other’s eyes and say: ‘ We’ve done our work together, dear — and I think we’ve done it well! ’ ”

Rita’s eyes were full of tears as she answered:

"Oh, my frien', dat lo-ove — it is for-r some,  
ye-es, but it is not for-r me."

"I don't understand —"

"For-r me love is jost a leetle light in all dis  
dar-rk-ness — a leetle varmt' in all dis col' — a  
leet-tle flame dat bur-r-rn — not long an' den go  
out. A star dat come — an' is so bee-eau-ti-ful it  
bre-eng beeg teers an' when ve dry de eyes an'  
look again — de star is gone. I t'ink it is to be a  
leedle 'appier togeder den ve are apar-r-t — von  
meenute to lie steell in de beloved's ar-r-rm —  
vone leetle meenute to forget, my frien' — an' dat  
is all!"

Tom gathered her into his arms and held her  
tightly.

"My dear," he began, brokenly. But Rita  
tried to free herself from his arms.

"Oh, vhat you do?" she cried in alarm.

Tom pressed her to him.

"I love you!"

"Don't."

"And you love me. Now say it," he insisted.

"No," she cried, piteously.

"You must," said Tom, through his shut teeth.

“ All r-r-right — I lo-ove you! Now ve are alone — you 'ear — an' dare is nodings in de vor-r-rld but you an' me — Dis is our time — our leetle meenute dat vill nevaire come again — so shut your eyes — an' 'old me close — an' lo-ove! ”

She threw her arms about his neck in complete abandon.

“ But, dear, I — ”

“ 'Ush! ” she cried, as she kissed him.

At that moment from the parish house next door came the sound of singing. The choir boys were practicing the hymns for the New Year's service. They were singing “ The Church's One Foundation ” and each line of it could be heard distinctly.

“ The Church's one foundation,  
Is Jesus Christ, her Lord.  
She is His new creation  
By water and the Word.  
From heaven He came and sought her  
To be His Holy Bride;  
With His own Blood He bought her,  
And for her life He died.”

Rita was the first to speak.

"Vhat is dat?" she asked.

"It's just the choir; they're practicing for to-night. I love you. When will you marry me?"

She slowly disengaged herself from him and turned away.

"I 'ave not t'ink de en' vould be so soon!" she whispered, half to herself.

"When — please tell me when?" he cried, eagerly.

"Ask me anodder time — no, nevair ask me; it is jost not possible," said Rita, as she wiped her eyes.

"But what's the matter? I don't understand."

"Vhy you in such a 'urr-ee? You mus' vait," she went on in a more matter of fact tone.

"I'd wait forever — if there's any hope."

Rita moved away from him.

"Please don' come near —"

"There is hope, isn't there?"

"No — no; I 'ave made vone beeg mistake."

"What —"

"I t'ink I 'ave been mad for jost vone leetle vhile, but now — I cannot marr-ee you. Good-by."

She started for the door, but he stopped her.

“Why not?”

“Oh, let me go!” she cried.

“Not till you’ve told me why.”

“Can you not see what is so plain an’ clear?  
Your frien’s — dey know — De night I meet  
you, you ’ave see de young men look at me —”

“Rita!” Tom stood, paralyzed with a sudden suspicion.

“Dey know vy I can nevaire marr-ee you —  
de whole vor-r-rld know —”

Her voice softened and she smiled a little.  
“An’ now I t’ink if you don’ min’ I go avay.”

“No, my dear — not yet,” said Tom, very tenderly.

He led her to the settee by the fire.

“I think — I think you have something to tell me.”

“I cannot — no — please do not ask —”

“I’m not going to ask — I’m just going to sit here and hold your hand and listen.”

He takes her hand.

“That’s what I’m here for, you know — just

to help people when they're in trouble and need a friend."

"You are so goo-od!" said Rita, shaking her head.

"No. I'm not — but you'll find I'm very sympathetic. Why, I remember one day last week — Tuesday it was — that a little tenement girl named McDougal, came in to see me. We sat here just as we're sitting now and after a while she told me all about it. She was going to be married the next day to a young carpenter over on Eighth street, but there was something she hadn't told him — poor child! She didn't dare! She'd been — treated badly by some brute of a man when she was only sixteen years old. Of course he'd left her — and she'd tried to put together the pieces of her life and go on with her work — and then she met the carpenter and fell in love and was going to marry him — and at the last moment her conscience began bothering her — so she came to me."

"An' — vhat did you tell 'er?"

"Oh, I didn't say much! I just suggested things here and there. And in the end, God

bless her! she made up her mind to do the right thing!"

"De r-r-right —"

"She went home and told him all about it."

"An' den —"

"Oh!" went on Tom, cheerfully, "he was a decent sort of fellow and he loved her — so of course he understood — and — well I married them Wednesday morning and now they're two of the happiest people in New York!"

"An' vould you feel dat vay, too?"

"Me?"

"If someone dat you lo-ove — No, don't look at me! — If someone dat you lo-ove come an' say, 'I am not goo-ood — I must tell you now because ve lo-ove each oder! You are de fir-r-rst man I 'ave ever lo-ove — you are de fir-r-rst man I 'ave ever tol'!'"

"Well?"

"Could you forgive 'er, Meestaire Tom?"

"You poor little child!" said Tom, brokenly, as he took her in his arms.

"No, no!" she cried despairingly, "you do not onderstan' — it is I who am not goo-ood."

"There, darling, there! Don't cry, it's all right, you've been fair and brave and honest, you've told me and I forgive you from the bottom of my heart!"

"Oh! Oh! I do not see 'ow it is possible! no I do not see—I don't, I don't!" she sobbed.

"Why not? It was a long time ago, wasn't it? When you were poor and struggling and lonely, you didn't know anything about the world — how could you? And you had to live."

"Yes! oh, yes!"

"But you mustn't think of it any more! You must just remember how afterward you pulled yourself together and raised your head and said to yourself, 'I have sinned, but that's all over, and from now on, I'm going to be a good woman! I'm going to turn the rest of my life into a splendid, beautiful thing! I won't stop until I can be proud of myself!' And oh, my dear, I'm so glad, I'm so glad that you can be — now!"

"An' is dat vhy you can for-give me?"

"Is what, dear?" he asked, not understanding her.

"Because it 'appen' so long ago?"

Just for an instant there was a touch of Tom's pulpit manner as he said:

"I naturally believe that all sins, finished and truly repented of, should be forgiven by every Christian man or woman."

"I see—I see," she sighed, and rising she walked away from him.

Tom was a boy again in a moment; all trace of the priest was gone.

"And now that everything's cleared up between us, do you know what we're going to do?"

"Do? Tell me."

"Go right upstairs, of course, and announce our engagement to Aunt Emma and Mr. Van Tuyl. Come on!" he laughed. "Come on!"

"No—no—not now."

"What?"

"Vait a leetle," she said, wheedlingly, "vait until to-morr-row."

"But you're sailing to-morrow!"

"Ye-es—dat is vhy—"

"Nonsense! If you don't look out I'll begin to think you're ashamed of me. Come along!"

He put his arm about her waist and started toward the door. Rita freed herself.

"No. I say—it is too soon—I am not r-r-ready—ve mus' vait."

"Wait? What for?"

"Mebbe—mebbe dey do not like it vhen ve tell dem!"

"Now don't you bother about Aunt Elizabeth. She's—"

"Ah, no! I do not bodder about 'er! But—"

She stopped abruptly. Tom gave her a questioning look.

"It surely isn't Mr. Van Tuyl that's worrying you? Why, he's my oldest friend—and father's and mother's too. He's just like one of the family. Of course we must tell him right off!"

"Vhy von't you let me tell 'im?" she suggested.

"What?"

"To-night—vhen I can see 'im all alone! Oh, please—please let me tell 'im," she cried. Tom was puzzled. There was a pucker in his brow.

"But why? What's the matter?"

"If ve tell 'im now, 'e vill be so angr-ee!"

"Nonsense! And even if he is, we don't care!"

"'E vill say t'ings about me — oh, yes, 'e vill!"

"But he doesn't know anything about you!"

Rita did not reply.

"Rita, he doesn't know anything about you, does he?"

"No — I mean — not ver' much!"

"What —"

"Jost a leetle — I tell 'im a leetle vone night in Paris —"

"You don't mean — what you've told me?"

"Yes, an' so if ve go upstairs now an' —"

"But you said just a minute ago that I was the only man you'd ever told — because I was the only man you'd ever loved."

Rita looked frightened, bewildered.

"I 'ave forget — oh, it vas two — t'ree years ago —"

Tom began to think.

"But wait! He talked to me very openly about you — why, only last Saturday when I went to see him about the new gymnasium —"

“Vhat—”

“He used every possible argument — except that one. Why he never said so much as a word against —”

“I know,” she answered calmly, “I — I ask ‘im not to.”

“You? But — but he wouldn’t take your side where I’m involved — why, it’s incredible!”

“Oh, ye-es, ‘e vould — you do not know!”

“But why —”

“Vhy?” echoed Rita, fighting for time.

“Yes — there must be a reason.”

“Can you not guess?”

“No. Tell me —”

“It is because — oh, long ago, you on’erstan’ — ‘e vas foolish enough to like me — jost a lee-tle —”

“What —”

“It vas not my fault,” she went on quickly, “I cannot ‘elp it when peoples —”

“When was this?” he asked sternly.

“Oh, two — t’ree — year ago! I did my bes’ t’ stop ‘im — it vas not easy — I tell you dat!”

“Did he want you to marry him?”

She was trying to speak lightly.

“No — no — it vas noddings — noddings at all — ‘e jost like to sen’ me flowers an’ ‘ear . . .”

“How long did his — attentions last?”

“I — I dunno.”

Tom took a step toward her.

“You mean he’s in love with you still?”

She turned to him with sudden abandon.

“Oh, don’ talk about dat any more! Jost take me in your arms an’ keess me till —”

Tom’s eyes were flashing.

“And you knew he felt that way — you knew it all this time?”

“Yes, I knew —”

“Then why didn’t you tell me?”

“I did not t’ink you vould — like it.”

“Like it! Why, it was all right. He can’t help loving you, I suppose. There isn’t anything to conceal” — he stopped suddenly — “Rita, there isn’t anything to conceal?”

“Vhat?”

“Tell me there isn’t — tell me —”

“I don’ know vhat you mean —”

“Quick, for the love of God!” cried Tom.

She put her hands before her face.

"Don' look at me," she cried.

"Not Mr. Van Tuyl? Not he?"

"Please — oh, please —"

Rita was terror stricken.

Tom gave a cry of anger. He clenched his teeth.

"It is not true," she cried, frantically. "I say it is not true."

"What?"

"Dere 'as been noddings — you make vone terrible meestake."

"How do I know?" he asked, coldly.

Tom was a skeptic now.

"I tell you — I," she went on, beating her breast.

"But you kept back something before."

"No."

"How do I know you're not doing it again?"

"No — I am not! I tell you I am not!"

Tom pulled himself together.

"Ssh — be quiet! They'll hear you upstairs."

His voice was shaking. "Now we must be calm, both of us — quite calm and sensible. We must

settle this matter here once and for all. If it's true, I beg you — for both our sakes — as you will answer on the day of judgment — I beg you to tell me now!"

"If I say 'Yes, it is true!' would you — would you again forgive me?"

"Ah! — then it is — it is —" he cried.

"No! no!"

"You've said so. I heard you say it."

"Dat is not so!"

"Well, didn't you?"

"No! — no! — no!" she cried, passionately.

"Will you swear it?"

"Ye-es — I vill swear."

He picked up a small book from the table and held it out to her.

"Put your hand here — on my mother's Testament."

"So?" said Rita, obeying him.

"And look me in the eye and say after me —"

"Ye-es?"

"I swear there has been nothing wrong between Mr. Van Tuyl and me."

Rita gave a piteous little moan and closed her eyes.

“Oh, Madonna — !”

“Swear it!” cried Tom, in a shrill voice.

“Vhat?” Rita opened her eyes.

“You won’t?”

“I swvar dere ‘as been — vhat you say? — nodding wrong between — Meestaire Van Tuyl — an’ me.”

She swayed and would have fallen, but Tom, with a sob of relief, caught her in his arms.

“Oh, my darling — forgive me — I’ve been a brute to doubt you, I’m — What’s the matter? Rita — Rita — !”

Her head had fallen forward. She had fainted. He carried her over to the settee, laid her on it, poured out a glass of water and tried to make her drink it.

“My poor little girl — there! It’s all right — I’m never going to bother you again. Forgive me — oh! my darling, just forgive me this once. I was out of my head. I didn’t know what I was saying. Please — please — ”

Rita, still dazed, sat up.

"What's the matter? Aren't you going to speak to me?"

She rose unsteadily to her feet.

"Rita!"

He took her hand, but she snatched it away.

"I van' to go avay," she cried. "You don' believe me — you don' lo-ove me —"

"Yes, I do — I love you more than anything in the world. I love you and I'm going to marry you —"

She turned on him furiously. Her eyes were blazing.

"Vhy you make me sveal dose t'ings? Vhy you make me —"

"Forgive me, dear — please —"

"Gooda-by."

"No, wait!"

He stopped her as she reached the door, taking hold of both her hands.

"I say — gooda-by!"

He stared into her face. Her eyes dropped.

"Oh, let me go, please! I mus' r-r-re-tur-rn to de 'otel — it is so late — you know I al-vays sleep before I sing an' —

"Vhat for you look at me like dat? Let go,  
I say — let go!"

"I believed you when you swore just now — I  
want it understood that I believed you —"

"Vell?"

"So — if you don't mind — I think — I think  
— I'll ask Mr. Van Tuyl to come down here —"

"Vhat —"

"And then we'll tell him — we're engaged!"

"Ah, no — no — don't do dat," Rita cried, in  
sudden fright, "vait a leetle while —"

"Not a minute! Not a second!"

He pulled at the bell rope madly.

"Please —"

"I won't!"

"No — no —"

"Oh, my God —"

There was a knock at the door.

"Come in!" cried Tom, trying to control his  
voice.

"You rang, sir?" said Roger.

"Yes. Please ask Mr. Van Tuyl to step down  
here. Tell him I'll keep him only a moment."

"Very good, sir."

As the door closed, Rita turned on Tom vehemently.

“Ver’ vell, I vill not stay.”

Tom planted himself before the door.

“You’ve got to!”

“Remembair my per-r-for-rmance,” she pleaded.

Tom snapped his fingers in her face.

“I don’t give that for your performance.”

“’E come; I ’ear ’im,” she cried, in desperation.

“Oh, let me go!”

Tom recoiled as though someone had struck him a blow.

“Rita, don’t tell me you’re afraid!” he exclaimed.

“Oh, let me see ’im fir-r-rst,” she pleaded, coaxingly, “for jost vone leetle meenute; it vill be all r-r-right.”

“I won’t,” he shouted, all his suspicions aroused again.

Rita shrugged her shoulders and, sitting down at the piano, began to play a Chopin waltz.

“Ver’ well. I don’ care; I ’ave done my bes’.”

"Ah!" said Van Tuyl, genially. "Still here? We thought you'd— Why, what's the matter, Tom?"

Rita stopped playing. She stared from one man's face to the other.

"Nothing, sir. I — asked you to come down because — I wanted you to be the first to know of my good luck," said Tom, trying to speak calmly.

"Good luck?" questioned Van Tuyl, in a surprised tone.

"Yes. Madame Cavallini has been good enough to — we're engaged."

"Engaged?" echoed Van Tuyl, in a toneless voice.

"Yes, engaged — engaged to be married," repeated Tom, harshly.

"My dear boy, I congratulate you."

Quite calmly, Van Tuyl held out his hand.

"What?" cried Tom, almost choking.

"I congratulate you," Van Tuyl went on serenely. "Madame Cavallini stands alone, as I have always said. And while I confess I am — a bit surprised, I am flattered"— he turned to Rita

and bowed—"that she has chosen one of my friends and countrymen for this — great honor."

"Then it's all right?" cried Tom in delight.  
"You approve — you give us your consent?"

Van Tuyl gave a broad smile.

"Yes — for the parish, I mean — represented by yourself as senior warden and chairman of the vestry."

"Most certainly, my dear boy. You know you can always count on me to wish you every happiness."

Tom looked baffled.

"Why, you talk — as if you liked it —"

Van Tuyl looked puzzled.

"I don't quite —"

"All I can say is, you must have changed your mind since Saturday."

"Since Saturday?" questioned Van Tuyl.

"Why, don't you remember warning me, with tears in your eyes, to keep away from this — this lady —"

Van Tuyl turned to Tom in astonishment.

"Ah, but that was Saturday!" he exclaimed.

"And now, sir—I—I want to ask you here—before us both—if you were absolutely frank—"

"What's that?" said Van Tuyl a little sternly.

"If there were any arguments against my—my attachment which you did not see fit to offer at the time—"

"Why, Tom, I don't understand—"

"If there was, sir, tell it now—tell it, for God's sake—or else forever after hold your peace!"

There was a pause. Both Tom and Rita had their eyes fixed on Van Tuyl's face.

"I don't see why you're so excited—but if it gives you any satisfaction to know I said all I could on Saturday—"

"You held nothing back?" asked Tom.

"Why, no—of course not!" said Van Tuyl coolly. "What's the matter, Tom?"

Tom turned away in silence. Rita made a sudden movement. Van Tuyl suppressed her with a glance. Tom faced them again, controlling himself with difficulty.

"Sit down, sir, please," he said.

"Well?" remarked Van Tuyl, as he seated himself.

"I—I want to apologize beforehand for what I'm going to say. I know I'm acting outrageously, but—I can't help it! No, wait! You're my best friend, Mr. Van Tuyl—" He turned to Rita. "And you're the woman I want to make my wife, so I—I'm sure you'll both of you be sympathetic and make—allowances for me."

"Of course, my boy, of course!" said Van Tuyl heartily.

Tom was embarrassed, but he went bravely on.

"Madame Cavallini has been very frank and open with me, sir. She's just told me about certain portions of her career, and of course, knowing as I do, how hard it is for girls when they're poor and young, and alone—why, I should be only too glad to tell her it's all right and blot it out from my memory forever, but—but—"

He paused, unable to go on, then gripping the edge of the desk with both hands and leaning over it, haggard and terrible, he said:

"Before I can do that, there's one thing I've got to be sure of—"

“Yes, Tom?”

“It seems, you’ve been an — an admirer of hers for some time —”

Van Tuyl glanced at her involuntarily.

“For God’s sake, don’t look at her now! And what I’ve got to be sure of is that there never has been anything between you two —”

“What!” Van Tuyl shouted his amazement.

“I’ve asked her and she’s denied it, and I believe her, implicitly, of course, but if — if you’ll be good enough to deny it, too — oh, merely as a matter of form! why, I — I shall be much obliged. Well?”

Van Tuyl turned toward Rita before he spoke. He gazed at her steadily.

“There’s one thing I’m not going to deny, and that is my very deep and very true affection for Madame Cavallini. It is a sentiment none the less deep and true, because it has lived for years with no response from her, and I am proud of my hope and my belief that it will continue so long as I’m alive to cherish it. As for the rest of your question, Tom, when you’re yourself again, you’ll



“GOOD-BY, MADAME—I OFFER YOU THE BEST OF WISHES——”



agree with me that it deserves no answer. Good-by!" He rose.

"Good-by, madame—I offer you the best of wishes—"

He turned toward the door, but Tom stopped him. He seized Van Tuyl by his hand gratefully.

"No, wait—you shan't go until I've begged your pardon. I've been a fool, sir—a perfect fool, but if you can I want you to forgive me!"

"Don't you think, my boy, you'd better ask Mme. Cavallini's pardon first?" said Van Tuyl.

Tom turned to Rita.

"Rita, darling—I don't know just what to say—but I think if you forgive me again—I can promise I'll never—never—You do forgive me, dear—don't you? Please—"

Rita pulled herself together. There was a grim, determined look on her face.

"No—no—I cannot! It is too much!" she exclaimed.

"What!" cried Tom.

She looked at him very tenderly.

"I lo-ove you—I mus' spik de trut'—"

"Be quiet!" cried Van Tuyl, realizing what was coming.

It was Rita who was merciless now.

"It is all lies what ve 'ave said — all lies — all lies! I vas 'is mistr-r-ress till de night I meet you!"

"Not Mr. Van Tuyl — not —!" cried Tom, choking.

"Tom, listen to me for one minute!" expostulated Van Tuyl.

Tom turned on him furiously.

"You thief — liar!" he cried.

Van Tuyl, still calm, was white as a sheet.

"For God's sake, Tom, don't —"

Tom rushed at Van Tuyl to strike him down, but Rita like a flash was between the two men, holding them apart.

"'E lied for me," she gasped. "I tell you 'e lied for me."

Tom's arm dropped to his side.

"Please go — both of you," he said huskily.

He stooped to pick up the little Testament which had dropped to the floor. He replaced it on his desk. Van Tuyl came toward him.

Rita meanwhile had put on her cloak. Slowly she went to the mantelpiece and took off his mother's necklace and earrings. She kissed the little locket as she laid it down. Her own pearl necklace with its diamond cross she forgot entirely as she picked up her muff and Adelina and slowly turned to go. Tom was sitting in his arm-chair, his face buried in his hands.

"Meestaire — Meestaire Tom," she began contritely. But at the sound of her voice Tom shuddered. As she reached the door she turned again and looked at him very tenderly. "I 'ank you — for 'aving loved me," she said as she passed out.

## CHAPTER VI

*What care I, if for love of your fair face,  
To the wide winds my work and place I throw!  
My work is just to love you, and the place  
Just where you are, the only place I know.*  
—Richard Le Gallienne.

### LA CAVALLINI BIDS HER AMERICAN PUBLIC A FOND GOOD-BYE

SIGNORA VANNUCCI, La Cavallini's chaperone, major domo, watchdog and intimate all rolled into one, left the Academy long before the opera was over that night and hurried back to the Brevoort House. From the moment, late that afternoon, when Rita, a red-eyed, white-faced wraith of her usual self, had returned from her drive and thrown herself down sobbing on the bed, good-hearted, vagrant, slipshod old Vannucci had realized by instinct that something serious had come to pass. And her heart rejoiced within her and even the disreputable sprig of mustache which decorated one side of her lip took on a cheerful, upward,

exuberant turn, as though expectant of happier days to come when there would be no Rev. Thomas Armstrongs to poison the purely artistic atmosphere of their menage. For between Van nucci and Tom there had waged a furious antipathy from the first day of their meeting. Van Tuyl had always been the old woman's favorite of all La Cavallini's swains, and to see this courtly gentleman suddenly flouted, disregarded and treated with a silence which was far more ignominious than contempt was too much for her to stand silently. So, when she dared not relieve her mind and air her views directly to Rita, she talked by the hour to Adelina and cursed Tom cordially, consistently, and consecutively in all the half dozen languages which in a more or less broken state always hung on the end of her polyglot tongue. And Adelina, with a perversity characteristic of her species, would listen by the hour, look wise as she lay chattering to herself in her beautifully upholstered and gayly caparisoned little cradle, and at the first approach of Tom would evince every evidence of enthusiasm and delight. Van Tuyl, the monkey had always de-

tested, not because she held anything particularly against his habits or his character, but simply because Van Tuyl had a playful habit of sticking out his finger at her whenever he approached — a custom which infuriated Adelina almost to the point of jibbering madness. So to state the circumstances mildly, throughout the past five weeks, Vannucci and Adelina had scarcely been on speaking terms. At least what each had to say about the other was certainly not fit to print.

Once at Rita's suggestion, Tom, by way of currying favor with the vehement old Italian, had sent her a bunch of roses. But the garbage pail finale which speedily overtook the bouquet was no whit less dire and instantaneous than the similarly sinister fate which befell the roses La Cavallini had in the kindness of her heart sent to Miss Armstrong. Fate had ordained that these two old women were never to meet; which was rather a pity, as they most assuredly could have relieved each other's minds on a number of subjects thoroughly. But to-night, one glance at Rita's stricken, tearstained face convinced the old woman that the best thing in the world had happened.

The break with the heathen heretic had come at last. Her soul was glad within her; but outwardly she gave no sign. Rita, shut up in her bedroom until the hour of her departure for the theater, spoke no word to her, and Vannucci, by long experience, knew better than, in such a crisis, to venture even a chance remark. There was a great deal of electricity in the air of the diva's apartments.

But once the curtain had risen on the last act of the opera the faithful old Italian slipped quietly away from the Academy, leaving Rita to the tender mercies of her regular dresser, and was now by slow degrees broiling her already too rubicund features over the grate fire, where, with the aid of a saucepan and various condiments known only to herself, she was concocting a species of spaghetti which La Cavallini particularly adored. The table was spread for supper, and Adolph, the fat German waiter, was making himself as officious as possible bustling about the place. But both the sitting-room and La Cavallini's bedroom, which opened off of it, were in an extraordinary state of dishabille. Trunks with their

lids still yawning open occupied three-quarters of the floor. Dresses, hats, all sorts of feminine impedimenta were scattered everywhere. And while Vannucci watched the macaroni simmer and Adolph dexterously laid his covers, they chatted indiscriminately of the days when, according to their views, grand opera had really been grand opera.

“ Madame, she vill be hungry when she back comes from de opera,” ventured Adolph.

“ She eat a noddings before she go — she dreenka a leetle vine an’ coffee, dat is all,” exclaimed Vannucci.

“ Ach! No great artiste will eat pefore she sing! Do I not know? Have I not de first tenor of de Royal Court Opera of de city of Steichenblatter been? Do I not remember how I feel when —”

“ You ‘ave forgetta da cheese,” Vannucci interrupted him gloomily.

“ Du lieber Gott!” cried Adolph, crushed only for a moment. As he returned with the cheese the old woman was smiling retrospectively.

“ Ah, when I was a prima donna at Bologna

an maka my début as Linda de Chamonix in da gr-r-reat, da bee-autiful, de gala per-for-rmance — an' 'is —'ow you say —'Is Excellenza da duca di Modena, 'e stan' an' clapa de 'an's an' say so loud — 'Bravo, Vannucci! Bravo! Bravissimo —'"

"Your sauce, it burn," Adolph, avenging the cheese, interrupted at the first opportunity.

Vannucci rushed to the fire and stirred her sauce.

"Madonna santa proteggeteci!" she cried.

"Ach! so! De good old days — dey are all gone!" sighed Adolph, as he began to mix the salad.

"Da opera now — vhat is eet? Von beeg noise!"

Adolph wagged his head in corroboration.

"Dis 'Faust' an' 'Mignon' —"

Vannucci covered one ear with one hand. The other hand still stirred the sauce.

"Impossibili!" she cried.

"Ungeheuer!" agreed Adolph.

"But 'La Favorita'!" Vannucci's face was beaming. She kissed her hand ecstatically.

“‘‘Der Freischutz! ’’” And Adolph rolled his eyes in his enthusiasm.

“Bellissima! ”

“Wunderschon! ”

“Celestiali! ”

“Kolossal! ”

“But ah! who now gotta da voice to seeng dere! ” sighed Vannucci as one without hope.

“Mario? Bah! ” Adolph spat on the floor.

“Grisi? Pouf! ” Vannucci snapped her fingers contemptuously.

“Guiglini? Ein schwein! ” cried Adolph.

“La Patti? Un pulce! ” Vannucci’s face was a malediction.

“La Cavallini? ” continued Adolph in a questioning way, as he watched to see which way the cat was going to jump. He had been present on occasions when both women had expressed their minds about each other and their art freely.

“Ah! si — la Cavallini! ”

Vannucci’s face was radiant now.

“She haf a leedle somet’ing”— began Adolph patronizingly.

“Ah, sometime when I stan’ in de veengs an’

'old er shawl an' leesten — I t'ink it is myself again — come back fr-rom long ago!"

"Ach, Gott! I, too, haf treams!" Adolph exclaimed. "An' when I my half dollar pay on de stairs up climb an' de orchestra begin — I shut my eye an' yet vonce more again I am in Steichenblatter —"

"The opera. It is 'Norma,'" volunteered Vannucci, catching his enthusiasm.

"I am 'Pollio —'"

"The great duet —"

"Act three — it comes at last!" Adolph began to sing softly in German.

Vannucci, all on fire now, was leading the orchestra with her spoon.

"Piu forte! Cosi! Ora! Crescendo!"

Each struck an attitude and, tremendously in earnest, began to sing. When Adolph successfully scaled the final high note of the aria Vannucci threw herself violently into his arms. Both were still gasping for breath when a page entered with a card.

"Where's the madam?"

"She 'ave not yet r-r-return," said Vannucci,

once more watching her macaroni. "Give me da car-rr-d — queeck, leetle animal! Queeck, I say!"

Vannucci snatched the card and read it.

"A-ah! It is milor! 'E 'ave come back! Santi benedetti! Go — breenga him in" — then turning to Adolph:

"An' leesten, my frien', a bottle of champagne! Queeck!"

"Champagne!"

"Da besta you got!" she cried joyously and began to unpin her skirts.

Van Tuyl came in in evening dress.

"Well, signora!" he exclaimed genially. "I haven't seen you for some time, have I? You're younger and more beautiful than ever!"

Vannucci shook hands with him vehemently.

"Ah, milor — you maka da joke as alvays! But I don' care — I am so full of joy be-cause you 'ave come!"

"Thanks, very much," said Van Tuyl, glancing at the two parrots dozing in their cage. "How's the menagerie? Remember me, old lady — eh?" He crooked his finger at the birds.

"Dey are full of lo-ove for-r milor — ecco! See! Manrico, 'e visha to keess 'is 'and!" exclaimed Vannucci.

"Bite it, you mean!" laughed Van Tuyl.  
"Where's Adelina?"

He walked to her gay cradle by the fire, where the monkey, at the sound of his voice, had begun to chatter viciously.

"She 'ave jost eat a vone greata beeg suppair," said Vannucci, anxious to apologize for Adelina's hostile bearing.

"Six olives, strawberry jam, a few hothouse grapes — the same old menu, I suppose," laughed Van Tuyl.

"An' da cupa of chocolate! Ah, milor — you 'ave r-r-recolleck ev'ryt'ings!"

Van Tuyl's eyes strayed to the saucepan.

"What's that you're cooking — not your famous macaroni?"

"It is for madame. She eat a noddings alla da day. I coma 'ome ear-liee an' maka dis for — a — sur-r-pr-ise!"

"How did she get through the performance?" asked Van Tuyl.

"Un triomfo enorme! Eet maka me t'ink of dat so splendeed night I seeng Lucrezìa Borgia an' 'is Excellenza da Duca di Modena, 'e—"

"Yes, I remember," interrupted Van Tuyl, looking at his watch. "Madame is late."

"She say addio to Signor Strakosch an' de oder ar-r-rtistes an' r-r-receive de pr-r-resents."

"Really?"

"Da peen vid da beeg r-rubie, an' de br-race-let wid many pear-r-rl, an' ah! Madonna!—da di-mon' crown fr-rom alla da signora of New Yor-rk—"

"Wait! What's that?" exclaimed Van Tuyl, listening.

From far away came the distant strains of "Yankee Doodle," played by a brass band. The cheering of the crowd could be heard distinctly. As Van Tuyl quickly raised the window the murmur swelled into a babel.

"Santi Benissini!" cried Vannucci, clapping her hands like a schoolgirl.

"It's a brass band, down Fourteenth Street!" exclaimed Van Tuyl. "They're coming from the Academy."

"Ecco! See—"

"Torches! By jove! It's a regular Republican rally!"

"More peoples — an' more — an' more, an' more dey come!" Vannucci was half way out of the window.

"Every fellow with his hat off — and zero weather, too!" shivered Van Tuyl.

"See!" pointed Vannucci. "Do peoples in de windows! Dat so fat man — vat is dat 'e say?"

"Listen! They're cheering her. They're cheering Cavallini."

"Ah! She come — she come!"

"Where?" cried Van Tuyl, leaning out of the window, too.

"Dere — do you not see da car-r-riage?"

"But where's the coachman — where are the horses?" exclaimed Van Tuyl. "Good Lord! if those young fools aren't dragging it themselves!"

"Ah! when I was prima donna at Bologna an' singa Lucrezia Borgia for-r"— suddenly — "You see 'er — yes?"

"Ah! there she is!" cried Van Tuyl.

"By Jove! By — Jove!"

He stared spellbound. The band, now much nearer, slowly began "Way Down Upon the Suwanee River." The torchlights from the procession illumined the two figures on the balcony. The crowd was almost underneath them. Presently the music stopped. There was a burst of cheering. Vannucci waved her handkerchief wildly.

"Evivva! Evivva! Brava Cavallini!  
Brava regina! Ah! Ecco! Cosi va bene!"

She laughed and waved her handkerchief once more.

"She look up — she see us!"

Van Tuyl removed his hat and bowed in his most stately way.

Suddenly there was the splutter of a rocket. Vannucci clutched Van Tuyl by the arm and crossed herself.

"It's all right — those fellows on the corner are just setting off some fireworks. They're bound to bid farewell to '68 and La Cavallini with a blaze of glory!"

"She come! She descend fr-r-rom da carriage. Look! 'ow da young mans kissa 'er 'and!"

cried Vannucci. "Queeck! Shuta da window. Dis room is all dam col'."

Vannucci flew to the grate and threw another log on. Van Tuyl closed the window. Faintly the band could be heard still playing. The tune now had changed from "Suwanee River" to "Knowest Thou That Fair Land?" And at the first strains of La Cavallini's favorite aria the crowds in the streets burst into cheers again. Van Tuyl turned to the old Italian with a beaming smile.

"I'm proud of young New York to-night," he said. "They're applauding one of the world's great artists, and they're not ashamed, God bless 'em, to show their feelings in a perfectly normal, animal way. I'm glad that Providence cast my lot in this dear old town at a time before it grows so big and vast and rich — as it is bound to do, of course — that no one will have time to see their old friends any more and indulge in a little human friendliness and sentiment. The town's bound to become the world's great mart and metropolis beyond a doubt, and it will be all very gigantic and beautiful, but" — and Van Tuyl

shook his head with a regretful shake — “but it won’t be the old New York. I’m rather glad that I shan’t have to be here to see it.”

“Ecco! Ecco!” Vannucci was screaming, not paying the slightest attention to Van Tuyl’s municipal prophecy. “Vill milor’ ‘elp me vid dis chair? — and the table, more near the fire. Madonna mia! I ‘ave forgot!”

She rushed into the bedroom and from the mass of materials scattered on the canopied bed, she snatched an elaborately embroidered white silk dressing gown and a tiny pair of bedroom slippers lined with fur. She placed the slippers on the hearth to warm and hung the dressing gown close to the fire on the back of the chair.

“Milor, ‘e recolleck dis robe at Millefleurs?” she asked with a meaning little smile. “Ah! what gooda times milor’ ‘e giva us dere!”

There was a knock, the door burst open and in came Adolph, bursting with excitement and importance. He was carrying a champagne bucket. Behind him came a troop of servants bearing fleets of floral pieces all decorated with the entwined colors of Italy and the United States.

" You haf hear? — You haf seen? Look dere at the fireworks. It is almost as magnificent as a var in my own country."

" Holy cats!" exclaimed one diminutive page boy as he dragged in a floral harp twice as big as himself. " This town ain't seen a night like this since the Prince of Wales was here!"

The waiters were gabbling in French. Adolph was spluttering and gesticulating in German, Vannucci was calling on all her Italian patron saints to bless the occasion fittingly, and even Adelina in her cradle, aroused by the excitement, was indulging in a few monosyllabic monkey shines which seemed quite as intelligible as any of the remarks of the humans. Shrieking, commanding, cursing in her politest manner Vannucci was everywhere at once. At the height of the excitement the door flew open again and hind-first, bobbing and bowing as he preceded La Cavallini, Baptiste, the manager of the hotel, came in proffering all sorts of compliments in French.

" Ah, madame! nous sommes infiniment heureux de prendre part dans le triomphe d'une artiste si

celebre — et, si je l'ouse dire, une cliente si exquise!"

"Merci m'sieur — merci, mille fois. Vous êtes trop amiables," La Cavallini was saying as she entered. Then at sight of Vannucci, she cried in Italian: "Per Pamor di Dio, mettili fuori! Non posse piu —"

The cheering from without became louder, more furious.

La Cavallini paused and stood listening for a moment. She looked fagged and weary. The diamond crown which had just been presented to her by the women operagoers of New York made her look ten years older than she really was. She was in evening dress and in one hand she carried a wreath of laurel leaves tied with a golden ribbon — a little parting token from Cornelius Van Tuyl. With her other hand she held close against her body a huge cluster of white roses. She was very pale, but in spite of her fagged condition the triumphant farewell of the public had unquestionably pleased her infinitely. As the cheering from outside continued Van Tuyl stepped forward and took her hand.

"Madame," he said firmly, "they are calling for you. They won't go away. Speak just one little word of good-bye to them. You really must. It's their due."

"Je vous prie, madame — pour l'honneur de l'hôtel!" pleaded Baptiste excitedly.

Rita turned on the Frenchman in a flash of petulance.

"Non! Je refuse — entendez vous? Je refuse absolument!"

"Madame, your public's calling you," said Van Tuyl, and without further parley he led her toward the window.

"Vat?" exclaimed La Cavallini, still petulant.

"You must obey!" said Van Tuyl firmly.

"Oh, very vell! Open de window," cried Rita.

She stepped out on the balcony without any further protest. At sight of her the crowd cheered wildly. The excitement on Fifth Avenue grew louder than ever. Holding one end of the heavy window curtain in front of her bare neck to protect it from the cold, Rita leaned forward and in her clear, high voice said simply:

"Sveet ladies — gentlemans — dear-r peoples who 'ave been so goo-ood to me. I do not know your-r names an' faces — I can-not follow you into your-r 'omes. I can jos' seeng a leetle — an' pr-r-ray de saints dat somet'ing in my song vill spik to you an' say —

"I lo-ove you! You are all I 'ave to lo-ove in dis beeg vor-r-rld. Mebbe you don' on'erstan' jos' what dat mean — you who 'ave 'usban's, vives an' leetle child-ren, too!

"Ah, vell!" She smiled down on the sea of upturned faces. "I vould not like it dat you should! I on-lee tell you so you feel like doing for-r me vone las' gr-r-reat kin'ness —"

There were cries of "What is it?" "Tell us!" "Give us a chance," from below. She took a step forward and spoke very earnestly.

"To-mor-r-row I go far-r avay. Mebbe some time I seeng for-r you again" — La Cavallini held up her hand for silence — "an' mebbe not. Who knows? But if t'rough all your-r 'app-ee, 'app-ee lives you carr-ee, vay down deep, vone leetle t'ought of me — vone golden mem-o-ree of my

song — vher-e-ever I am, dear-r frien's, oh! I vill know it an be gla-ad!"

There were shouts of "We will!" "That's easy!" "Couldn't help it!" "Trust us!"

Her tone changed. She continued with tender playfulness:

"In my countr-ee ve 'ave a leetle — vhat you say? — *t'ing* ve tell each oder when ve say 'addio' — 'Che le rose floriscano nei vostri cuori fin ch'io ritorno a coglierle!' 'May de r-r-roses blossom in your-r 'ear-rt until I co-ome to gadder dem again!'"

It was Van Tuyl who helped her very tenderly in through the window. La Cavallini was crying. The crowd was cheering more madly than ever. Baptiste in an ecstasy was proclaiming his raptures. Vannucci hustled him and his waiters out of the room.

"She 'ave eat nod'ings for vone — two days!" she cried. "Alons! vous comprenez? Getta out!"

The waiters flew, but Monsieur Baptiste, unable to restrain himself any longer, snatched at her hand and kissed it convulsively.

"A demain, madame! Et dormez — bien!"

As the door closed behind Baptiste and his crew La Cavallini turned listlessly toward the fire.

"Oh, my 'ead!" she exclaimed in her broken English. "Eet is so ti-r-red! Eccola!"

She lifted the diamond crown from her head and let it fall upon the table. One by one she took off her diamond necklace, her bracelets, medals, and her rings and threw them carelessly haphazard on the table. Then, turning to the fire again, she sat herself disconsolately before it all in a little heap. Vannucci, gabbling softly to her in Italian, picked up the jewels and placed them carefully in the jewel case. Van Tuyl, leaning against the piano, was carelessly rolling a cigarette. When he had finished and lighted it, he took it to Rita. She took it eagerly and for the first time that evening greeted him with a friendly smile.

## CHAPTER VII

### LA CAVALLINI POINTS THE WAY AND TOM FOLLOWS IT

*I would not spend another such a night,  
Though 'twere to buy a world of happy days.*

—Shakespeare.

*Do you hear the Little Voices all a-begging me to go?  
All a-begging me to leave you. Day and night they're  
pleading, praying,  
On the North-wind, on the West-wind, from the peak  
and from the plain;  
Night and day they never leave me — do you know what  
they are saying?*

“He was ours before you got him, and we want him  
once again.” — Robert W. Service.

*She sees a sea of faces like a dream;  
She sees herself a queen of song once more;  
She sees lips part in rapture, eyes agleam;  
She sings as never once she sang before.  
She sings a wild, sweet song that throbs with pain,  
The added pain of life that transcends art —  
A song of home, a deep, celestial strain,  
The glorious swan-song of a dying heart.*

— Robert W. Service.

“ ‘EE vould not spik to me vone leetle vor-r-rd,’ ”  
she said, looking up to Van Tuyl for sympathy.

"I say, 'T'ank you for-r 'aving l-o-oved me!'-  
jos' like dat! an' den I vait — but 'e say noddings  
— so I go avay —"

"Don't, dear — it's no use! Don't let's talk  
about it."

"'Ow long, you t'ink, befor-re 'e vill for-get?  
'E veep jos' like a leetle boy — when fir-r-rst 'e  
meet the bad-ness of de vor-r-rld —"

"Ah, don't, my dear! Don't think of it any  
more!"

She reached up to the mantelpiece for a pack  
of cards and began to sort them out in various  
packages like an old-fashioned fortune teller.  
Rita looked down at the cards.

"T'ree club — dat mean a long, long jour-  
ney —"

"Clever work! You're certainly going away,"  
chimed in Van Tuyl, delighted at any excuse to  
change the current of her thoughts.

"Ye-es — I am go-ing avay!" said Rita.

"Well, what comes next?"

"Vour — five — seex di-mon' — an' goo-ood  
vones, too. Dat mean success an' mon-ee —

what you say? — gr-r-reat fame — on-lee to  
r-reach it I mus' go t'rough much —”

“ You'll get there — never fear! ” he said.

“ Ah, che m'importa? ” She pointed to the  
jack of hearts.

“ Dat blond young man — look! 'Ow 'e is  
far fr-rom me! ”

Van Tuyl leaned forward to watch the cards.

“ From you? — Oh, of course. You're the  
red queen down in the middle of all those spades.  
They're nothing bad, I hope? ”

“ You are among dem, ” she said grimly.

“ I? — ”

“ Ye-es, — an' de oders, too — see! You are  
all about me — dere is no vay out — ”

“ But, dear, I — ”

Rita turned to him with a sad little smile.

“ My — what you say? My flames — my  
splendid vones of whom I vas so pr-r-roud —  
look! 'ow you are black — an' str-r-rong — Ah,  
Santa Madonna! I 'ave give you ev'ryt'ings —  
an' now when lo-ove, 'e co-ome an' smile an' 'old  
out 'is dear-r — 'ands, I cannot give — no, cr-r-

ruel vones! You 'ave leave me noddings — you 'ave take — it all —”

She swept away the cards and buried her face in her hands.

Van Tuyl put his hand gently on her shoulder. Vannucci came bustling in from the other room.

“Supper's ready!” said Van Tuyl.

“I am not 'ungr-ree.”

“Oh, please,” he pleaded. “Why, the signora has taken all the trouble to cook your favorite macaroni —”

“No, no, no!” she cried disconsolately.

Van Tuyl raised her very gently and led her to the table.

“There; come along, little girl. Doesn't that salad look good? We'll sit you down in this big armchair at the head of the table, and I'll be butler, with my napkin over my arm — so!”

He imitated a servant's manner.

“And will madame drink chianti or a little champagne?”— Looking at the label on the bottle—“Roznay et Perrault, '52, not too dry; I venture to recommend it. Champagne? Very good, madame. I'll open it at once.”

He pulled the cork, while Vannucci, chattering ever, filled her plate high with spaghetti.

"There! Just taste it now and tell me if it's all right," he said as he filled her glass. "Please, dear! You really need it! You know the sight of all these good things makes me hungry. I wonder if there'd be enough to give me just a —"

Vannucci was on her feet in an instant.

"Ah, you lika da macaroni, I beta my life!"

"Here! That's enough! Thanks," said Van Tuyl, as he poured himself a glass of wine. "And just a swallow of champagne — I declare, I feel quite famished! Well? Are you going to let me starve?"

Rita roused herself from her reverie.

"Vhat you say?" she asked blankly.

"You know I can't eat anything until my hostess does."

"It is a treeck you play. You want to maka me eat."

"No, on my word. I'm hungry myself."

"Den jos' because I am so fr-rightfull-ee polite!" she smiled and nibbled a piece of spaghetti. Vannucci and Van Tuyl exchanged glances.

"E buono?" asked Vannucci, hanging over her.

Rita patted the old woman's wizened cheek.

"Squisito —!"

"I'm thirsty, too!" cried Van Tuyl.

"Blageur!" laughed Rita, as she raised her glass to him.

"A thousand thanks!" said Van Tuyl, putting down his glass. "And now, my dear, the signora's had a hard day's work packing and tomorrow she'll be up at dawn. Why don't you send her to bed and give her a good night's rest?"

"Grazia, milor'— I am not-a much tir-r-red!" smiled Vannucci, preparing to depart.

"Good night, signora." He rose and kissed the old woman's hand.

"Now sit down and finish your supper," he commanded Rita when Vannucci had departed.

"No — it is enough —"

Van Tuyl filled her glass and lifted his own.

"Well, then let's drink a toast — eh? I have it! To the splendor of your days to come! What's the matter? Don't they tempt you?"

La Cavallini did not drink, but looked into her glass instead.

"I do not dreenk to vhat I know mus' be — but to a dr-r-ream I vill not dr-r-ream again — De peectur-re of a small r-room, var-rm an' br-r-right — vit 'im so bus-ee wr-riting at 'is desk — an' me, befor-re de fir-r-re — jes' rock-eeng, smileeng — vit a leetle babee nur-rsing at my breast'—"

Van Tuyl rose and seated himself upon the arm of her chair.

"My dear," he said, "I want you to listen to a plan. Now, how would you like it if I sailed on the *Alaska* in April and met you in Paris and took you straight back to Millefleurs —"

"But my R-r-russian concert tour-r?" exclaimed Rita.

"They can get Patti in your place."

"Patti!" she cried contemptuously.

"Yes, she'd be glad enough to go!"

"But my dear-r frien', it is not — vhat you say? — it is not fair!"

"To whom?"

"To dose poo-oor R-russians!" exclaimed La Cavallini in all seriousness.

"You're jealous!" laughed Van Tuyl.

“Of Adelina? Me?” with a world of scorn.  
“My Lor-r-d!” Van Tuyl caressed her hair with one hand.

“Then why bother? Think of Millefleurs and how we loved it on those nights in May! And it’s there now — asleep and empty, like some spellbound garden — just waiting for the touch of spring — and us — to give it life again!”

She rested her head against his arm despondently.

“You tol’ me vonce you ar-re too ol’ to lo-ove Millefleurs —”

“My dear,” said Van Tuyl, “your sorcery can make me young again. We’ll spend the spring in our enchanted palace — and somehow, in all that beauty, we’ll manage to forget.”

Rita drew away from him.

“No, no. Dat is im-poss’ble — you don’ understan’ —”

“What is it? Tell me!” he asked seriously.

She rose to her feet.

“I cannot live like dat — any mor-r-re —”

Van Tuyl was humbled.

“Forgive me. It was a mistake. I didn’t mean to hurt you, dear.”

Rita laid her hand upon his arm.

“In dese las’ few veeks I lea-rn somet’ing all new — an’ bee-autiful — de goo-ood-ness of de vor-rrld! It co-ome like some gr-reat light dat bur-r-n an’ blind an’ str-rike me to de gr-r-roun’. It show me for-r de fir-rst time to myself! Ah, Santo Dio! What it is I see. But now I cannot change — an’ yet I cannot jus’ forget an’ go on as be-for-re — you see, I am — oh, what you call it? All meex up! An’ so I lie down ’ere to-night — an’ say ‘goo-ooda-by.’ I vish dat I could die right ’ere to-night.”

“And what about Tom?” asked Van Tuyl, intensely serious now.

“Don’t spik ’is name!” she cried.

“Don’t talk about dying, Rita. That’s all nonsense. If you really love Tom as you say you do, why don’t you live for him?”

“Don’t ask me — no — it is too much,” said Rita at bay.

“I know it’s hard,” said Van Tuyl with sudden tenderness, “but that’s no reason why you should

give up. Why, it's your prize — your chance — the power to turn this dreadful business into something radiant and true — the final gift Tom's put into your hands!"

Rita clasped her hands together.

"Ah, Dio mio!" she cried.

"Be brave! Live gloriously!" Van Tuyl went hurriedly on, "and if responsibility's the price of love — love's worth it — isn't it, my dear?"

Rita was silent for a moment. Then she nodded her head.

"You ar-re — r-r-right," she said. "But, oh! my frien' — my frien' — what 'ave I done — what 'ave I done dat all dis co-ome to me?"

She burst into tears and threw herself on the couch, sobbing bitterly.

Van Tuyl reached down and put his hand on her shaking shoulder.

"My dear, I'm proud of you," he said. "And now will you promise to get all these silly ideas of death out of your head?"

"It ees so easy jus' to die," she said. "But you don' — tr-r-r-us' me?"

He turned up her face and looked her in the eyes.

"I do — indeed, I do!" he said and kissed her on the brow.

A knock came at the door.

"Who is dere?" called Rita.

"It's me, ma'am," called the page boy.

"There's a gent downstairs t'ee ye."

"Vhat — ?"

(She opened the door a little.)

"They told him it was awful late an' you was tired, but he wouldn't go an' made 'em send up this."

Rita snatched a card from the tray.

"It's Tom?" cried Van Tuyl, as he watched her face.

"Ye-es," she nodded.

"What does he want?"

Rita read the message on the card aloud.  
"I mus' see you. It is life or death. Dat's all."

"You mustn't see him. It's useless — worse than that — it's dangerous; it's madness."

"But I vant to tell 'im — vhat you 'ave tol'

me. I vant dat 'e should know all 'e 'ave done for-r me," she said simply.

"I wouldn't, dear," warned Van Tuyl.

"I mus'!" she cried decisively; then turning to the door:

"Leetle boy! Please as' de gentl'man to coome up-tair-r."

Van Tuyl picked up his coat and hat.

"Go out dat vay," she said, pointing to the corridor door, "or you meet 'im on da stair-r."

"Good-by!"

Van Tuyl held his hand out.

"Gooda-by, gooda frien'," she said, earnestly.

"Do you forgive me, dear?" he asked, still holding her hand.

"For-r vhat?"

"For everything," he said. With a little gasp she lifted his hand and lightly touched it with her lips.

The tears were in Van Tuyl's eyes as he gathered her into his arms.

"My darling! Beautiful! Joy of men!"

"Oh, my goo-ooda frien'!" She sobbed brokenly and buried her face on his shoulder.



“I THANK YOU FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY SOUL!”



"Little bird!" he said, as he kissed her hair. "I shall hear you singing in my heart forever. I thank you from the bottom of my soul!"

He bowed and reverently kissed her hand; then walked quickly out of the room.

Rita, the instant he had left her, ran to the window and opened it. There was a furious wind blowing and the snow came swirling into the room. A knock came at the door. She closed the window and turned toward the door, half terrified, half delighted. The knock came again—louder this time. She tried to call but could not for a moment. Finally she managed to gasp, "Co-ome!"

Tom opened the door. She shuddered at the sight of him. His hair was disheveled, his eyes wild. He was without either overcoat or gloves and carried his soft hat in his hand. His voice was thick and hoarse; his whole manner strange; he moved and talked as though he was being consumed by some internal fire. He looked as much like a fanatic as he did like a drunken man. He closed the door, and stood with his back against

it, looking at her fixedly. His shoulders were covered with snow flakes.

" You — you want to see me? " she asked, after a moment.

" Yes."

Seeing how wet he was she came toward him quickly.

" De fir-re — please! Go queeck an' var-rm your-rself."

She took him by the arm and drew him across to the grate.

" Santi benissimi! You are all vet! An' your-r shoe — per carita! You 'ave valk 'ere in dis snow! "

" Yes," said Tom in an odd, dazed sort of tone. " I've been walking — all the time that you were singing there — I think I got as far as Trinity. But I don't quite remember — "

" Vhat for-r you co-ome out on a night so bad? An', if you mus' vidout dat beeg t'ick coat? — "

Tom stared at her blankly.

" I was thinking about something else — about you — I was praying for you in the twilight — in the evening — in the dark night — "

“Oh, Meestaire Tom!” she cried, both frightened and bewildered.

“I walked and prayed,” Tom went on in the same tone, “and in my prayers I felt a little hand here on my arm — some lost one offering herself. I thought — but when I looked down at the quivering mouth under the veil and bonnet — my head swam — *it was You* — always You!”

“Me?”

“I heard you crying as I ran away — and I ran and ran — till I saw lights and people — and then a little beggar, playing on the curb, held up her hand — but when I gave her a penny, she thanked me — *with your voice!*”

“No! No! You were meeshtake —”

“Of course. And then I saw you — walking by me in the streets — and looking at me out of windows — hundreds of different women, but every one was you. I couldn’t move — you were so thick and close — and it began snowing, and I thanked God because that would blot you from my sight. But no, each snowflake was a tiny face — *your face*; some crowned with diamonds, some with loosened hair, some old and terrible, some sad

and young; and you came, and came and kept on coming, thousands and millions of you, driving and swirling in your devil's dance by the glare of the gaslight on the corner, and not one spoke — you all just looked at me as if you wanted something; and suddenly I knew; you were begging me to bring your soul to God before it was too late, and I called to you. I cried out that I would! And then you smiled and vanished and I came here through the storm."

"You poo-oor, poo-oor boy!" cried Rita, clasping her hands.

"Of course, you understand," he said sternly. "As man and woman we've done with one another, but I am still a minister of God's word and you're still a human being in mortal peril!"

"Ah, don't talk dat vay!" she said tenderly. "You ar-re all shak-eeng, see! you vill catch col'!"

She tried to make him sit down by the fire. But Tom paid no attention to her words, though he never took his eyes from her face.

"D'you know you're standing on the brink of life or death? You must choose between them —"

“Ye-es! ye-es!” she cried, trying to calm him.

“Anodder time —”

Tom raised his voice.

“No — not another time! To-night! This very minute — now!”

“Oh, vhy you co-ome?”

“To save you, dear! Now, listen! At midnight I must lead my clergy through the streets — you know, my plan to gather in the vagrants for my New Year service — and to-morrow you go away. But I have to-night! And I'll never leave you till you've given me your soul!”

“Ah! if you on-lee knew 'ow —” she began; but he interrupted her and held up his hand. He spoke as in a sort of rapture.

“Listen! Don't you hear it — now — above us — in this very room?”

“'Ear-r vhat?”

“The sound of many waters —”

“Vat?” she asked, puzzled.

“The Voice,” Tom went on solemnly. “The thunder of an angel's wings.”

There was a pause, while Rita looked at him in bewilderment.

"I 'ear-r de vind blow — an' my 'ear-rt beat — dat is all," she said at last.

"It's here; I feel it!" he cried, beating his breast.

"Oh, dear God — dear God! You're giving me the strength to conquer her!"

"Conqu-air?" she exclaimed in sudden terror. "You vant to 'ur-r-rt me! Ah, don' 'ur-r-rt me — please — please, Meestaire Tom!"

He turned to her and spoke quite tenderly. "My dear, I wouldn't hurt you for the world. It's love I'm offering you —" Rita made a quick movement away from him. "No, wait, my poor child — not the sick passion of those luxurious beasts — not even the great pity I once knew. The love I bring to you to-night is God's alone!"

"God's lo-ove?" said Rita, still more bewildered.

"Yes — His — the mighty tenderness that moves the stars and understands when little children pray —"

"Vat you mean? I don' know vat you say."

"Little lost soul I am ready to carry you home!"

Little tired heart, eager for joy — follow me and find it in His arms!"

"I don'— qvite on'erstan'," she said, thinking in her heart the man must have gone mad.

"I thought our meeting was the work of chance. But no! God drew you to me, over land and sea, that I might be the engine of His word! You are a bride — but, ah! not mine — not mine!"

"A br-r-ride — me?" echoed Rita, shaking her head sadly. "No — no — dat is im-poss'ble!"

Tom's eyes were gleaming. He was using his pulpit voice as he never had before.

"Don't you hear the midnight cry — 'Behold! the Bridegroom cometh! Go ye out to meet Him!' Don't you see Him — coming from the wilderness like a pillar of smoke, perfumed with myrrh and frankincense? His eyes are as a flame of fire — on his head are many crowns — he wears a garment dipped in blood and on it a name is written — *Lord of lords and King of kings!* Hark! He is outside, knocking at your door! O Rose of Sharon — Lily of the Valley — cease your slumber — for the hour has come!"

“Your eyes — dey bite me — oh, dey bur-r-n me up!” she cried, hiding her face in her hands.  
“Meestaire Tom — *Meestaire Tom!*”

“Darling,” he cried hoarsely, “open your heart — for God’s sake let Him in!”

As he strove to take hold of her Rita shrieked in terror:

“Don’t touch me — don’t — *let me go!*”

She fell upon her knees and strove to free her hands from his clutch, but he held her tight.

“So you’re proud — you think you can close your soul against the Lord! Well, let me tell you now that unless you repent the day will come when your pride lies broken — shattered by His wrath!”

“Let me go — *let me go!*” she cried again. She tore herself free and ran over to the far side of the room, where she stood crouching in terror against the wall.

She began suddenly to cry like a frightened child. “Oh! Oh! I am afr-r-raid!”

“Afraid! *Afraid!*” cried Tom, still more wildly. “Miserable sinner, how can you live with that horror staring in your eyes? The

vision of that dreadful day when the sun is smitten, and the moon is blood — ”

“ I don’ believe dat — no — no, I don’ — I don’t ! ”

“ When the graves are broken, and the sea gives up its dead — and great and small they stand before Him and the book is opened and He sits in judgment — ”

“ Meestaire Tom — jos’ vait vone meenute ! ” she cried in a frantic effort to stop him.

“ Don’t you hear that great Voice, like a light that blinds — ‘ I made you keeper of My vineyards. But your own vineyards you have not kept. So you shall be cast into the bottomless pit and the lake of fire — and there, in the midst of your eternal torment, you shall hear the “ Alleluias ! ” in the rainbow round My throne ’ ! ”

He sank into a chair exhausted by his own vehemence. He buried his face in his hands. His whole frame shook with sobs. Rita came toward him slowly.

“ Meestaire Tom,” she said very quietly, “ I am quite sure dis is de las’ time dat I loo-ook upon your-r face. An’ so I vant to tell you jos’

a leetle somet'ing — an' den — vell, mebbe I can say 'goo-gooda-by.' " She came a little nearer and spoke at first with some difficulty. " You ar-re ver' kin' to t'ink of me so much — aftair all de tr-r-rouble I 'ave breeng — but, dear — you can for-rget me now — it is all r-r-right — your vor-r-rk is done!"

" What's that! " cried Tom, suddenly, looking up.

Rita's eyes were shining.

" I vant to ma-ake my life all goo-ood — like you-r-rs! Ah, ye-es — I know dat vil be 'ar-r-rd, but I don' car-re — an' mebbe de kin' Madonna she vill 'elp me — vhen she see me try." She clasped her hands together and lifted her face to his with the dawn of a new hope in it.

Tom stared at her fixedly again. " Your lips drop as the honeycomb — your mouth is smoother than oil — but your feet go down to death — and your steps take hold on hell!"

Rita held her ground. She seemed to have suddenly lost her fear of him.

" You don't think God, 'E vill for-r-give me — no? " she asked a little anxiously. " Ah, foolish

vone! 'E vill," she smiled. " Did 'E not make my face so men 'ave al-vays lo-ove me — did 'E not put my voice 'ere to de-light de vor-r-rol? Did 'E not give to vone poor leetle girl — who ask 'Im not'ings — so much to car-r-ree dat she lose 'er vay? 'E vill not be sur-r-pr-ise she stumble so-ometimes — 'E vill not scol' much when she make meestake — 'E vill jos' smile an' keep 'Is candle bur-rning — an' in a leetle while she see it — an' co-ome 'ome!"

Tom rose to his feet and came toward her.

"Promise me something!" he exclaimed.

"Vhat?"

"Take my hands and look me in the eye — and promise me never to give yourself to any man again."

Rita turned away in agony.

"Ah, vhy don' you tr-r-rust me — vhy you doubt me so?"

"You won't?" he demanded at the top of his voice.

"'Ere — take my 'ands!" Tom seized them eagerly.

"'Ow col' you ar-re! — I promise — vhat you

vant I say? — nevair to give myself to an-y man again!"

" You swear it? "

" Ye-es, I swear! Now are you satisfied? "

" A-ah! " he cried suddenly and pushed her brutally away from him.

" What is it now? " cried Rita.

" I've just remembered that you swore before — "

Rita shrank guiltily away from him.

" No — no! Dis is not de same. Now I am 'onest! "

" You looked up — just as you're looking now, " Tom began.

She raised her hands as if to ward off a blow.

" No, no! " she cried. " Stop it! "

" And you lied — and lied — you *lied* to me! " cried Tom, continuing his arraignment.

" No — don't — please; it is all diff'rent now! "

" Different? I don't see it. Why, it's just the same — "

" No — no — I tell you — I am diff'rent — I 'ave change — I am go-ing now to be goo-ood. "

"But can you?" he asked sneeringly.

"Listen! I vill stop singing — leave de stage — fin' out a convent where dey take me in an' — Ecco! I 'ave it! Dere ar-re so-ome nuns near Geneva who nur-rse de seeck! I vill go str-r-aight from Napoli — lear-rn 'ow to 'elp — an' vor-rk until my flesh fall fr-rom de bones."

"You'll do that — just to show me you're sincere?" cried Tom.

Rita turned to him imploringly.

"I vill do all you vant — ye-es, *anyt'ing* — on-lee believe me — jos' believe — or else I die!"

Tom's heart seemed touched at last.

"All right," he said. "If you do that I'll —"

"You mean it?" exclaimed Rita scarcely daring to believe her ears.

Tom's eyes were full of tears.

"Yes. God bless you, dear — good-by," he said in a husky voice. He picked up his hat and had almost reached the door when he seemed to remember something and, thrusting his hand into the breast pocket of his coat, he pulled out the long pearl necklace with the diamond cross which she had left in his rooms that afternoon. As he

turned back to lay it down upon the piano, his eyes suddenly fell on Van Tuyl's visiting card. He snatched it up and glanced at it furiously.

"That card — this man Van Tuyl. He has been here this afternoon?" he demanded.

"Meestaire Van Tuyl — oh, yes. 'E only came to say good-by," she explained anxiously.

"He's been here then?"

"Si-si."

Tom put his hand to his throat as though to steady himself. His eyes were blazing. Again Rita began to cower.

"To-night?"

"Ye-es."

"When?" thundered Tom.

"Jus' be-fore you co-ome."

With a yell of rage, Tom seized the card and crumbled it in both hands.

"Oh! What a fool I've been! What a fool — what a blind, miserable, wretched *fool!*"

"Vhat is it?" she cried, bewildered once more. "Tell me — vhat 'as 'appen? Vhat you mean? O dear-r-r Lor-r-rd — *what you mean?*"

"Don't try to cheat me any more! I know

what's happened in this room to-night! While I was tramping through the storm and snow, praying with my whole heart for your soul's redemption — you lay here laughing in your lover's arms."

"No — no! It is not true!" she cried shrilly.

"And then I came — another chance to make a fool of me! And so you told me you'd repented — you smiled and smirked an — Tell me," he sneered, "how did you keep your face straight? I'm rather curious to know."

"Please," she cried piteously. "Meestaire Tom — jos' leesten — I vill —"

"And I believed you!" Tom went on savagely. "I *believed!* Another splendid joke to tell Van Tuyl! And won't the old man love it. And he'll be dead right — even *I* can see it's funny. Funny? It's the richest thing I've heard for years and years!"

He threw his head back and laughed bitterly. At the sound of his laughter Rita covered her ears.

"Don'— don'— it is too ter-r-rible!"

"Come on — let's tell him together!" cried

Tom deliriously. "Where is he? Outside there, hanging round the corners? No! He's still here — slinking about some servant's passageway — hiding behind a door at every sound — waiting till I have gone — and everything's quiet — and you whistle twice to tell him the coast is clear!"

"Dat is not so, I say! 'E co-ome in kin-ness, jos' be-cause 'e feel ver' sorr-ee for-r me — an' when 'e ask me to go to 'im, I 'ave re-fuse —"

"What?"

She raised her head proudly and faced Tom.

"I 'ave r-re-fuse — you 'ear me? I 'ave tol' 'im 'No!' an' 'e is a gr-r-reat beeg man — an' on'erstan' — an' den I t'ank 'im — an' ve say 'goo-gooda-by —'"

"You lie!" he thundered. "Why, look at those two chairs — they look like a refusal, don't they? And those glasses — champagne!"

"No — no — it is quite diff'rent — you ar-re all mee-stake!"

In fury Tom seized the table cloth and sent all the table's contents crashing to the floor. Then he turned on her fiercely.

"Now will you dare to deny Van Tuyl's your lover?"

"Yes! Yes! I do! I do!" sobbed Rita, swaying a little as she spoke. "I 'ave r-re-fuse 'im an' I tell you vhy. I t'ought it vas because I vant so much to be goo-od. But now I know dat I vas all meestake. I br-r-reak vit 'im because I lo-ove *anudder!*"

"Who is he?" cried Tom, glaring at her.

Half fainting Rita held out her arms toward him.

"*You!*"

Tom turned sharply.

"Don't!"

"Fr-r-give me," she cried, trying to pull herself together.

Tom twisted his hands as if in prayer.

"Oh, my God! Oh, my God!"

Rita, turning away from him, held on to the back of the armchair for support.

"If you don' min'— I mus' ask you now—to leave me—it is almos' midnight—you 'ave your-r sair-vice in de chur-r-ch—an' I myself mus'—tr-r-ry to sleep a leetle."

She turned with a great effort and, holding out her hand, tried to smile.

“So, goo-ooda night. I 'ope you —”

Her words died away in terror as she saw the expression on his face.

“Vhy you loo-ook at me like dat?” she cried, recoiling from him.

La Cavallini knew that look too well.

“All right — I'm going — yes — I'm going!” exclaimed Tom nervously. “But first there's something we must do — what is it? I forget! Oh, yes, of course! We must pray together! That's it! Pray for your soul and for your soul's salvation.”

“No — go now! I am in God's 'ands — 'E vill take car-re of me —” In sudden fear as he came toward her: “Oh! vhat you want?”

“Come here!” said Tom, thickly. He seized her by the arms.

“There! That's right! Give me your hands!”

He held them tight against his breast; then, as Rita struggled again to free herself, he seized her madly in his arms.

"What a fool! What a fool I've been!" he cried. "I thought I came to save you, but now I know it was just because I —"

"Meestaire Tom! Meestaire Tom!" she sobbed despairingly. "Please let me go. It is because I love you dat I ask! Don't be to me like all the other mans, for it would break my 'eart. Let me be good!" she cried imploringly. "Let me be good! Leesten! — leesten! — I am 'ere. I am alone. I 'ave not the strength to fight against you any more," she implored. "But before it is too late remembaire — remembaire what I say — this is the one beeg moment of my life. The kind of womans I vill always be is for you to say as we stand 'ere in dis room now — and oh, Meestaire Tom — don't make me bad again. You are a man God sent to 'elp the world. All right! 'elp me — go avay — my 'ear-r-rt it vill go with you always. If you vill only let me keep my soul. Let me be good," she cried. "Let me be good!"

At that moment came from the street the sound of singing. Tom started and seemed to come suddenly to himself. As his hold relaxed on her

she freed herself and rushed frantically to the window and threw it open.

“Leesten!” she cried. “It ees your boys. They’re calling you. ‘Ear vat they sing!”

Above the whistles and the church bells the voices of the choir of St. Giles’s rose clear and sweet. To Rita Cavallini that chorus seemed like a direct answer to her prayer.

From heaven He came and sought her  
To be His Holy Bride.  
With His own Blood He bought her  
And for her life He died.

Tom turned toward her abashed and shame faced. She faced him fearlessly, but with a look of unutterable tenderness in her eyes. He spoke no word to her; but kneeling down beside her he raised the hem of her skirt and kissed it reverently.

“Gooda-by,” she cried as he reached the door. “God bless you always, Meestaire Tom.”

And three minutes later from her little balcony she watched him marching at the head of his choir up Fifth Avenue and out of her life forever.

## THE EPILOGUE

*One that was a woman, sir; but, rest her soul, she's dead!*  
—Shakespeare.

*But, O, for the touch of a vanish'd hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!*

—Tennyson.

*And as I walk by the vast calm River,  
The awful River so dread to see,  
I say "Thy breath and thy depth forever,  
Are bridged by his thoughts which come to me."*  
—Jean Ingelow's "Divided."

"AND that's how I remember her," concluded the Bishop, "standing there all in white, with her hair loosened and her eyes full of tears. She crossed herself — I think that she was praying — and the next thing I knew I was on the sidewalk and my choir — God bless 'em! — were coming round the corner of Eighth Street, marching like soldiers to the same tune that wretched German band is murdering outside there now — Ah! Really — that's too much! Give them a quarter, Harry — and tell them to go away!"

Harry opened the window and threw a quarter to the band.

"Hi — you! That'll be enough for to-night!"

The music stopped. There was silence, save for a few far-off horns still welcoming in young 1913.

The Bishop roused himself as Harry returned and put the dead violets and handkerchief in his pocket.

"So that's what I wanted to tell you, my boy! I came home that night an older — and I think a better man."

"And — Madame Cavallini?" asked Henry eagerly.

The Bishop was still gazing in the fire.

"She became even more famous before her retirement — but of course you know —"

"Where is she now?" asked Harry.

"I'm not sure — but I believe she's in Italy somewhere — living rather quietly. She and Patti are the only ones left — a wonderful career, my boy — a very great artist — I never saw her again."

Harry stood up and placed his arms rather awkwardly round the back of his grandfather's chair.

"I say, Grandpa — d'you mind my saying that — that I think you're just a corker!"

The Bishop smiled at him approvingly. "Nonsense, my boy! But now I hope you understand I haven't *quite* forgotten what it feels like to be young — and although it's true I always read the *Evening Post* I still can sympathize — and even presume to offer some occasional advice!"

"I know it — I appreciate it —" began Harry.

"My dear, dear boy," interrupted the Bishop solemnly, "unless your love is big enough to forget the whole world and yet remember heaven you have no right to make this girl your wife!"

Harry thrust his hands in his pockets and walked up and down the room.

"Grandpa, I've been an ass!"

The Bishop wiped his glasses and gave a whimsical smile.

"I suppose you have, Harry — I suppose you have!"

Harry turned and looked at his grandfather. "I don't think you quite understood me, sir," he said.

"I've been an ass to hesitate one single minute! However, it's all right now—Lucille and I are going to get married as soon as ever we can."

The Bishop looked startled.

"God bless my soul! But *that* isn't why I told you my story! I wanted to get this nonsense out of your silly young head!"

"Did you?" laughed Harry, patting the old man's shoulder. "Well, it turned out quite different and it's too late now to change. Have—have you any engagement for to-morrow afternoon, sir?"

"I—I can't say that I recall any at this moment," said the Bishop, still rather flustered.

"Then d'you mind if we make one now, sir? I want you to marry Lucille and me; four-thirty's a good hour, don't you think?"

"Oh, Grandpa!"—and he seized his hand—"I can't say it as I ought to—but we'll be grateful all our lives for what you've done to-night!"

"Well — well — ! I declare — !" said the Bishop as Harry vanished. He took out his handkerchief and passed it nervously over his brow. The door opened and Susan appeared smiling brightly.

"Happy New Year, Grandpa !" she cried as she kissed him.

"Happy New Year, my dear !" said the Bishop.

"Well — ?" she began angrily. "What happened? Did you convince him ?"

"Susan, I want you to order some white flowers and a wedding cake !"

"Oh !" Susan wriggled delightedly.

"For to-morrow afternoon !" exclaimed the Bishop very sternly. "Four-thirty, I believe."

Susan flung her arms about the old man's neck. "You *duck*! I just *knew* Harry could get around you! I knew this would happen," she went on confidently. "You see I'm a bit of a weather prophet, Grandpa, and I felt it in my bones that though we've had rather a stormy New Years, we are all going to have a perfectly lovely Easter."

The old man smiled at her lovingly. He stroked his hair. "The curls are the curls of my new little Susan," he said. "But the voice and those beautiful hands, they seem to be those of your dear grandmother."

The Bishop changed his tone. "So you knew all the time that Harry would get around me. Oh, did you?" said the Bishop, his eyes twinkling. "Well, now that you have arranged everything to suit yourselves, would you please mind finishing my paper and then going to bed?" He leaned back comfortably and closed his eyes.

"Where is it? Oh, yes! Wait till I turn on the light," said Susan. She sat down, crossed her knees, sighed, and unfolded the *Post*. "Civil Service Protest—Seven Year Tenure of Office Plan Opposed."

"Is there any foreign news?" asked the Bishop.

Susan could no longer restrain a yawn. "Oh, just some uprising in Portugal—a new Chinese loan." She turned the page. "Why, Cavallini's dead! I thought she died a long time ago, didn't you?"

"What does — it say?" said the Bishop, after a slight pause.

"Oh, it's just a cable. 'Milan — Dec. 30. Mme. Margharita Cavallini died this morning at her villa on the Lake of Como.' "

"Is that — *all*?"

"There's a whole column of biography stuck on underneath. Shall I read it? Oh, of course! I forgot! She and Patti were your two great operatic crushes, weren't they? Well, she was born at Venice in 1841. That makes her —" Susan began to count the years off on her fingers. "Let me see."

"Don't tell me how old she was!" pleaded the Bishop.

"All right," she smiled as she ran her eye down the column.

"Début at Milan in 1859 — Sang prima donna roles in Paris under the direction of Rossini — success in London — hm! — brought to this country by Strakosch — appeared as "Mignon" at the Academy of Music — Every one went mad over her, didn't they? 'Opera and concert tours over all the civilized globe — retired

in 1889—numerous charities—founded and endowed a home in Paris for poor girls who come to study music—in 1883 created Marchese Torrebianchi by King Umberto I—the intimate friend of Rubinstein, Grieg and Paderewski—never married—'that's funny, isn't it?' said Susan, dropping the paper for a moment. "Well, no matter what you say I bet she wasn't a bit more wonderful than my divine Geraldine!" She began to read again slowly. "Anglican Congress at Detroit—Federation of Churches—Further Plans. Oh, dear! There's the old Conference again!"

Susan yawned and, looking up, noticed that the Bishop's head had fallen forward.

"Sleepy, Grandpa?" she said, tenderly.

The old man roused himself.

"I—? No, my dear, I was just thinking—that's all."

Susan yawned profoundly again.

"Well, *I* am, anyway. May I go to bed now?"

The Bishop smiled indulgently.

"Of course, my dear, of course!"

Susan alighted like a little bird on the arm of his chair and kissed the top of his head.

“Oh, Grandpa, you *are* such an old darling!” she cried enthusiastically.

“Thank you, my dear,” said the Bishop gravely.

At the door she turned to him again.

“And *please* don’t sit up too late, will you? And don’t forget to turn off *all* the lights before you come upstairs.”

“I’ll do my best,” said the Bishop meekly.

“Grandpa —!” she called.

He turned in his chair. She smiled and blew him a kiss. “I love you!”

“Good night, little Susan,” said the Bishop.

He sat for a moment in silence, then, rising slowly, he closed the door and listened. There was no sound. Almost stealthily he went over to the case where the phonograph records were kept, put on his glasses and looked over those lying on top. Finally he selected one with much care and gingerly put it on the machine. He started it going. Switching off the lights the Bishop returned to his armchair by the fire. A

ruddy glow lighted up his figure. He carefully took from his inside pocket the dead violets and the little handkerchief. Looking at them, he smiled a tender little ghost of a smile and sighed. The rich voice of the Destinn record thrilled through the darkness:

— Kennst du so wohl?

Dahin! Dahin!

Mocht' ich mit dir, O mein Geliebter, ziehn!

THE END

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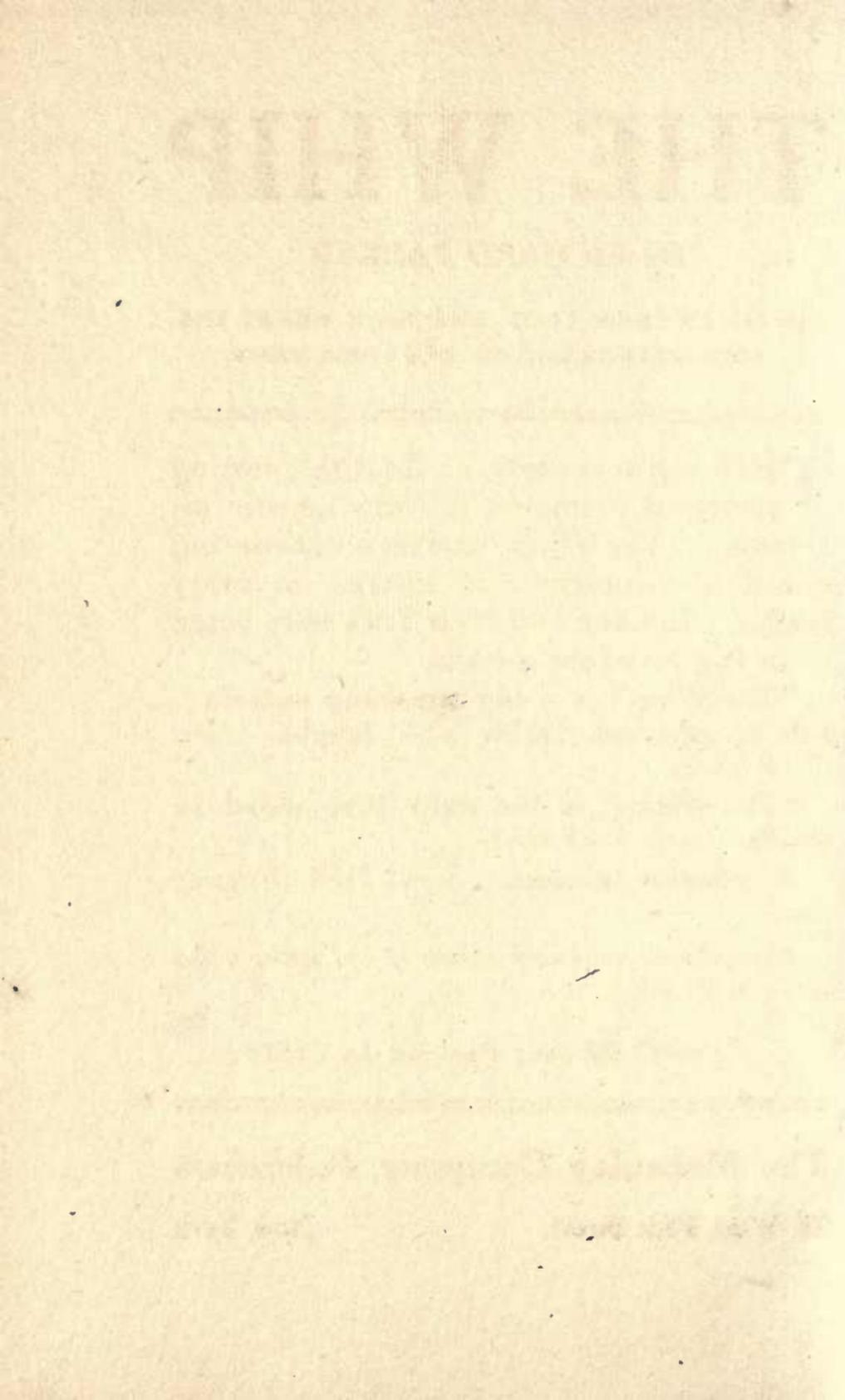
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